References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

JUNE 5-11

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | JEREMIAH 51-52

"Jehovah's Word Comes True in Every Detail"

(Jeremiah 51:11) "Polish the arrows; take up the circular shields. Jehovah has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, Because he intends to bring Babylon to ruin. For this is the vengeance of Jehovah, the vengeance for his temple.

(Jeremiah 51:28) Appoint against her the nations, The kings of Me'di·a, its governors and all its deputy rulers And all the lands they rule over.

***it*-2 360 ¶2-3**
Medes, Media

With Persians defeat Babylon. In the eighth century B.C.E., the prophet Isaiah had foretold that Jehovah would arouse against Babylon "the Medes, who account silver itself as nothing and who, as respects gold, take no delight in it. And their bows will dash even young men to pieces." (Isa 13:17-19; 21:2) The term "Medes" here may well include the Persians, even as the classical Greek historians commonly used the term to embrace both Medes and Persians. Their disdaining silver and gold evidently indicates that in Babylon's case conquest was the prime motive with them rather than spoil, so that no bribe or offer of tribute would buy them off from their determined purpose. The Medes, like the Persians, used the bow as a principal weapon. The wooden bows, though sometimes mounted with bronze or copper (compare Ps 18:34), likely 'dashed the young men of Babylon to pieces' by the hail of arrows, individually polished so as to penetrate even deeper.—Jer 51:11.

It may be noted that Jeremiah (51:11, 28) makes reference to "the *kings* of Media" as among those attacking Babylon, the plural perhaps indicating that even under Cyrus, a subordinate Median king or kings may have continued to exist, a situation by no means incompatible with ancient practice. (Compare also Jer 25:25.) Thus, too, we find that when Babylon was captured by the combined forces of Medes, Persians, Elamites, and other neighboring tribes, it was a Mede named Darius who was "made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans," evidently as an appointee of King Cyrus the Persian.—Da 5:31; 9:1; see DARIUS No. 1.

(Jeremiah 51:30) The warriors of Babylon have quit fighting. They sit in their strongholds. Their strength has failed. They have become like women. Her homes have been set on fire. Her bars have been broken.

***it*-2 459 ¶4**
Nabonidus

Interestingly, the Chronicle says concerning the night of Babylon's fall: "The army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle." This likely means without a general conflict and agrees with the prophecy of Jeremiah that 'the mighty men of Babylon would cease to fight.'—Jer 51:30.

(Jeremiah 51:37) And Babylon will become piles of stones, A lair of jackals, An object of horror and something to whistle at, Without an inhabitant.

(Jeremiah 51:62) Then say, 'O Jehovah, you have said against this place that it will be destroyed and left without an inhabitant, man or beast, and that she will become desolate forever.'

***it*-1 237 ¶1**
Babylon

From that memorable date, 539 B.C.E., Babylon's glory began to fade as the city declined. Twice it revolted against the Persian emperor Darius I (Hystaspis), and on the second occasion it was dismantled. A partially restored city rebelled against Xerxes I and was plundered. Alexander the Great intended to make Babylon his capital, but he suddenly died in 323 B.C.E. Nicator conquered the city in 312 B.C.E. and transported much of its material to the banks of the Tigris for use in building his new capital of Seleucia. However, the city and a settlement of Jews remained in early Christian times, giving the apostle Peter reason to visit Babylon, as noted in his letter. (1Pe 5:13) Inscriptions found there show that Babylon's temple of Bel existed as late as 75 C.E. By the fourth century C.E. the city was in ruins, and eventually passed out of existence. It became nothing more than "piles of stones."—Jer 51:37.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Jeremiah 51:25) "Here I am against you, O destructive mountain," declares Jehovah, "You

destroyer of the whole earth. I will stretch out my hand against you and roll you down from the crags And make you a burned-out mountain."

***it*-2 444 ¶9**
Mount, Mountain

Represent governments. In Biblical symbolism mountains can represent kingdoms or ruling governments. (Da 2:35, 44, 45; compare Isa 41:15; Re 17:9-11, 18.) Babylon, by her military conquests, brought other lands to ruin and is, therefore, called a "ruinous mountain." (Jer 51:24, 25) A psalm relating Jehovah's activities against warring men depicts him as being "enveloped with light, more majestic than the mountains of prey." (Ps 76:4) "The mountains of prey" may represent aggressive kingdoms. (Compare Na 2:11-13.) Regarding Jehovah, David said: "You have made my mountain to stand in strength," probably meaning that Jehovah had exalted David's kingdom and firmly established it. (Ps 30:7; compare 2Sa 5:12.) The fact that mountains may represent kingdoms aids one in understanding the significance of what is described at Revelation 8:8 as "something like a great mountain burning with fire." Its resemblance to a burning mountain would suggest that it is associated with a form of rulership having a destructive nature like fire.

(Jeremiah 51:42) The sea has come up over Babylon. By the multitude of its waves she has been covered.

***it*-2 882 ¶3**
Sea

Overflowing armies. Jeremiah described the sound of the attackers of Babylon as being "like the sea that is boisterous." (Jer 50:42) Hence, when he foretold that "the sea" would come up over Babylon, he evidently meant the flood of conquering troops under the Medes and Persians.—Jer 51:42; compare Da 9:26.

Bible Reading

(Jeremiah 51:1-11) This is what Jehovah says: "Here I am raising up a destructive wind Against Babylon and the inhabitants of Leb-ka'mai. **2** I will send winnowers to Babylon, And they will winnow her and make her land empty; They will come against her on all sides in the day of calamity. **3** Let the archer not bend his bow. And let no one stand up in his coat of mail. Show no compassion for her young men. Devote all her army to destruction. **4** And they will fall slain in the land of the Chal·de'ans, Pierced through in her streets. **5** For Israel and Judah are not widowed from their God, from Jehovah of armies. But their land is full of guilt from the standpoint of the Holy One of Israel. **6** Flee out of the midst of Babylon, And escape for your life. Do not perish because of her error. For it is the time for Jehovah's vengeance. He is paying her back for what she has done. **7** Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of Jehovah; She made all the earth drunk. From her wine the nations have drunk; That is why the nations have gone mad. **8** Suddenly Babylon has fallen and is broken. Wail over her! Get balsam for her pain; perhaps she may be healed." **9** "We tried to heal Babylon, but she could not be healed. Leave her and let us go, each to his own land. For her judgment has reached to the heavens; It is as high as the clouds. **10** Jehovah has brought about justice for us. Come, let us recount in Zion the work of Jehovah our God." **11** "Polish the arrows; take up the circular shields. Jehovah has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, Because he intends to bring Babylon to ruin. For this is the vengeance of Jehovah, the vengeance for his temple.

JUNE 12-18

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | LAMENTATIONS 1-5

"A Waiting Attitude Helps Us to Endure"

(Lamentations 3:20, 21) You will surely remember and bow low over me. **21** I recall this in my heart; that is why I will show a waiting attitude.

(Lamentations 3:24) "Jehovah is my share," I have said, "that is why I will show a waiting attitude for him."

***w12* 6/1 14 ¶3-4**
"Your Soul Will . . . Bow Low Over Me"

Amid the sorrow, Jeremiah is filled with hope. He cries out to Jehovah: "Without fail your soul [Jehovah himself] will remember and bow low over me." (Verse 20) Jeremiah has no doubt. He knows that Jehovah will not forget him—or repentant ones among His people. What, though, will the almighty God do?—Revelation 15:3.

Jeremiah is certain that Jehovah will "bow low" over those who truly repent. Another translation says: "O remember, and stoop down to me." Those words evoke a tender mental picture. Jehovah, "the Most High over all the earth," will stoop down,

so to speak, and lift his worshippers up out of their debased condition and restore them to his favor. (Psalm 83:18) Anchored by this hope, Jeremiah finds true comfort for his wounded heart. The faithful prophet is determined to wait patiently until Jehovah's due time to deliver His repentant people. —Verse 21.

***w11* 9/15 8 ¶8**
Jehovah Is My Share

8 The Levites *as a tribe* were to have Jehovah as their share. It is noteworthy, though, that individual Levites used the phrase "Jehovah is my share" to express devotion to God and reliance on him. (Lam. 3:24) One such Levite was a singer and composer. We will refer to him as Asaph, though he could have been a member of the house of Asaph, the Levite who led the singers in the days of King David. (1 Chron. 6:31-43) In Psalm 73 we read that Asaph (or one of his descendants) became perplexed. He envied the wicked who were leading a prosperous life and went to the point of saying: "Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself." He apparently lost sight of his privilege of service; he failed to appreciate that Jehovah was his share. He was spiritually troubled "until [he] proceeded to come into the grand sanctuary of God."—Ps. 73:2, 3, 12, 13, 17.

(Lamentations 3:26, 27) Good it is to wait in silence for the salvation of Jehovah. **27** Good it is for a man to carry the yoke during his youth.

***w07* 6/1 11 ¶4-5**
Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

3:21-26, 28-33. How can we endure even intense suffering? Jeremiah tells us. We should not forget that Jehovah is abundant in acts of loving-kindness and that many are his mercies. We should also remember that our being alive is reason enough not to give up hope and that we need to be patient and wait silently, without complaining, upon Jehovah for salvation. Moreover, we should "put [our] mouth in the very dust," that is, humbly submit to trials, recognizing that what God allows to happen is permitted for good reason.

3:27. Facing up to tests of faith during youth may mean enduring hardship and ridicule. But it is 'good for an able-bodied man to carry the yoke during his youth.' Why? Because learning to bear a yoke of suffering while young prepares a person to deal with challenges in his later years.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Lamentations 2:17) Jehovah has done what he intended; he has carried out his saying, What he commanded long ago. He has torn down without compassion. He has let the enemy rejoice over you; he has exalted the strength of your adversaries.

***w07* 6/1 9 ¶4**
Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

2:17—What particular "saying" did Jehovah accomplish in connection with Jerusalem? The reference here is apparently to Leviticus 26:17, which states: "I shall indeed set my face against you, and you will certainly be defeated before your enemies; and those who hate you will just tread down upon you, and you will actually flee when no one is pursuing you."

(Lamentations 5:7) Our forefathers who sinned are no more, but we must bear their errors.

***w07* 6/1 11 ¶1**
Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

5:7—Does Jehovah hold people accountable for the errors of their forefathers? No, Jehovah does not directly punish people for the sins of their ancestors. "Each of us will render an account for himself to God," says the Bible. (Romans 14:12) However, consequences of errors can linger on and be experienced by later generations. For example, ancient Israel's turning to idolatry made it difficult even for the faithful Israelites of later times to adhere to the course of righteousness.—Exodus 20:5.

Bible Reading

(Lamentations 2:20-3:12) See, O Jehovah, and look upon the one with whom you have dealt so harshly. Should women keep eating their own offspring, their own fully formed children, Or should priests and prophets be killed in the sanctuary of Jehovah? **21** Young boy and old man are lying dead on the ground in the streets. My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword. You have killed in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered without compassion. **22** As if for a festival day, you summon terrors from every direction. In the day of the wrath of Jehovah, no one escaped or survived; Those whom I gave birth to and reared, my enemy exterminated.

3 I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of his fury. **2** He has driven me out and makes me walk in darkness, not in light. **3** Indeed, he repeatedly brings his hand against me all day long. **4** He has worn away my flesh and

my skin; He has broken my bones. **5** He has besieged me; he has surrounded me with bitter poison and hardship. **6** He has forced me to sit in dark places, like men who died long ago. **7** He has walled me in, so that I cannot escape; He has bound me with heavy copper fetters. **8** And when I cry out desperately for help, he rejects my prayer. **9** He has blocked up my paths with hewn stones; He has made my roadways crooked. **10** He waits to ambush me like a bear, like a lion in hiding. **11** He has forced me off the paths and torn me to pieces; He has made me desolate. **12** He has bent his bow, and he sets me up as the target for the arrow.

JUNE 19-25

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 1-5

"Ezekiel Delighted to Declare God's Message"

(Ezekiel 2:9-3:2) When I looked, I saw a hand stretched out to me, and in it I saw a written scroll. **10** When he spread it out before me, it had writing on both front and back. Dirges and mourning and wailing were written on it.

3 Then he said to me: "Son of man, eat what is before you. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." **2** So I opened my mouth, and he made me eat this scroll.

***w08* 7/15 8 ¶6-7**
Meeting the Challenges of the House-to-House Ministry

6 The book of Ezekiel reveals something else that can help us to speak with boldness. In a vision, Jehovah gave Ezekiel a scroll written on both sides with "dirges and moaning and wailing" and told him to eat it, saying: "Son of man, you should cause your own belly to eat, that you may fill your very intestines with this roll that I am giving you." What did this vision mean? Ezekiel was to absorb fully the message he was to deliver. It was to become part of him, as it were, affecting his inmost feelings. The prophet goes on to relate: "I began to eat it, and it came to be in my mouth like honey for sweetness." Declaring God's message in public was a delight—like tasting honey—for Ezekiel. He felt highly privileged to represent Jehovah and to fulfill this God-given assignment, even though that meant delivering a strong message to an unreceptive people.—*Read Ezekiel 2:8–3:4, 7-9.*

7 This vision contains a valuable lesson for God's servants today. We too have a strong message to deliver to people who are not always appreciative of our efforts. For us to continue to view the Christian ministry as a God-given privilege, we must be well-nourished spiritually. Superficial or haphazard study habits will not be sufficient for us to absorb God's Word fully. Could you improve the quality or regularity of your personal Bible reading and Bible study? Could you more often meditate on what you read? —Ps. 1:2, 3.

***it*-1 1214**
Intestines

Physical food is assimilated by the intestines. This fact was metaphorically used to represent mental or spiritual digestion when, in vision, Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll, filling his intestines (Heb., *me-'im'*) with it. Ezekiel was to gain spiritual strength by meditating upon and storing in his memory the words written in the scroll. He was thereby nourished spiritually and provided with a message to speak.—Eze 3:1-6; compare Re 10:8-10.

(Ezekiel 3:3) He went on to say to me: "Son of man, eat this scroll that I am giving you, and fill your stomach with it." So I began to eat it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth.

***w07* 7/1 12 ¶3**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

2:9–3:3—Why did the scroll of dirges and moaning taste sweet to Ezekiel? What made the scroll sweet-tasting to Ezekiel was his attitude toward his commission. Ezekiel was grateful to serve Jehovah as a prophet.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 1:20, 21) They would go where the spirit inclined them to go, wherever the spirit went. The wheels would be lifted up together with them, for the spirit operating on the living creatures was also in the wheels. **21** When they moved, these would move; and when they stood still, these would stand still; and when they were lifted up from the earth, the wheels would be lifted up together with them, for the spirit operating on the living creatures was also in the wheels.

(Ezekiel 1:26-28) Above the expanse that was over their heads was what looked like a sapphire stone, and it resembled a throne. Sitting on the throne up above was someone whose appearance resembled that of a human. **27** I saw something glowing like electrum that was like a fire radiating from what appeared to be his waist

and upward; and from his waist down, I saw something that resembled fire. There was a brilliance all around him 28 like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. That was how the surrounding brilliant light appeared. It was like the appearance of the glory of Jehovah. When I saw it, I fell facedown and began to hear the voice of someone speaking.

***w07* 7/1 11 ¶6**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

1:4-28—What does the celestial chariot picture? The chariot represents the heavenly part of Jehovah's organization made up of faithful spirit creatures. Its source of power is Jehovah's holy spirit. The Rider of the chariot, who represents Jehovah, is indescribably glorious. His calmness is illustrated by a lovely rainbow.

(Ezekiel 4:1-7) "And you, son of man, take a brick and put it in front of you. Engrave on it a city—Jerusalem. 2 Lay siege to it, build a siege wall against it, raise up a siege rampart against it, set up camps against it, and surround it with battering rams. 3 Take an iron griddle and place it as an iron wall between you and the city. Then set your face against it, and it will be under siege; you are to besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel. 4 "Then you should lie on your left side and lay the guilt of the house of Israel on yourself. You will carry their guilt for the number of days that you lie on your side. 5 And I will impose on you 390 days, corresponding to the years of their guilt, and you will carry the guilt of the house of Israel. 6 And you must complete them. "Then for a second time you will lie down, on your right side, and you will carry the guilt of the house of Judah for 40 days. A day for a year, a day for a year, is what I have given you. 7 And you will turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared, and you must prophesy against it.

***w07* 7/1 12 ¶4**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

4:1-17—Did Ezekiel really act out the scene depicting Jerusalem's upcoming siege? Ezekiel's appeal for the change of cooking fuel and Jehovah's granting him his request indicate that the prophet actually acted out the scene. Lying on the left side was for the 390 years of error of the ten-tribe kingdom—from its beginning in 997 B.C.E. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. Lying on the right side was for Judah's 40 years of sin, spanning the period from Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet in 647 B.C.E. to 607 B.C.E. During the entire 430-day period, Ezekiel existed on a meager supply of food and water, prophetically indicating that there would be a famine during the siege of Jerusalem.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 1:1-14) In the 30th year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiled people by the river Che′bar, the heavens were opened and I began to see visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month—that is, in the fifth year of the exile of King Je·hoi′a·chin— 3 the word of Jehovah came to Ezekiel son of Bu′-zi the priest by the river Che′bar in the land of the Chal·de′ans. There the hand of Jehovah came upon him. 4 As I was looking, I saw a tempestuous wind coming from the north, and there was a huge cloud and flashing fire surrounded by a bright light, and from the midst of the fire was something that looked like electrum. 5 Within it were what looked like four living creatures, and the appearance of each one was like that of a human. 6 Each one had four faces and four wings. 7 Their feet were straight, and the soles of their feet were like those of a calf, and they were shining like the glow of burnished copper. 8 They had human hands under their wings on all four sides, and the four of them had faces and wings. 9 Their wings were touching one another. They would not turn when they went; they would each go straight forward. 10 Their faces had this appearance: Each of the four had a man's face with a lion's face on the right, a bull's face on the left, and each of the four had an eagle's face. 11 That is how their faces were. Their wings were spread out above them. Each had two wings that were touching one another and two wings covering their bodies. 12 They would each go straight forward, going wherever the spirit would incline them to go. They would not turn as they went. 13 And the living creatures had the appearance of burning coals of fire, and something that looked like torches of bright fire was moving back and forth between the living creatures, and lightning was flashing out from the fire. 14 And when the living creatures would go forth and return, their movement had the appearance of flashes of lightning.

JUNE 26–JULY 2

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 6-10

"Will You Be Marked for Survival?"

(Ezekiel 9:1, 2) He then called out in my ears with a loud voice, saying: "Summon those who will bring punishment on the city, each one with his weapon for destruction in his hand!" 2 I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate that faces north, each with his weapon for smashing in his hand; and there was one man among them clothed in linen, with a secretary's inkhorn at his waist, and they came in and stood beside the copper altar.

w16.06 **16-17**
Questions From Readers

Whom do the man with the secretary's inkhorn and the six men with smashing weapons described in Ezekiel's vision symbolize?

■ They picture heavenly forces that were involved in the destruction of Jerusalem and that will also be involved in the destruction of Satan's wicked system at Armageddon. Why is this adjusted understanding reasonable?

After Ezekiel saw the wicked things being done in apostate Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 607 B.C.E., he was given a vision of the events leading up to that destruction. He saw six men with smashing weapons. He also saw a man among them who was "clothed in linen" and had "a secretary's inkhorn." (Ezek. 8:6-12; 9:2, 3) This man was told: "Go through the city, . . . and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city." Then, the men with the smashing weapons were told to kill all those in the city who did not have the mark. (Ezek. 9:4-7) What does this vision teach us, and who is the man with the secretary's inkhorn?

This prophecy was given in 612 B.C.E., and its initial fulfillment refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army—something that was to occur just five years later. Although the pagan Babylonians were allowed to bring about that destruction, they were serving as Jehovah's executioners. (Jer. 25:9, 15-18) This was because Jehovah used them to punish his apostate people. However, the destruction was not to be indiscriminate. The righteous would not be destroyed along with the wicked. Jehovah lovingly made provision to save those Jews who did not agree with the detestable things happening in the city.

Ezekiel was not involved in either the marking work or the destruction itself. Instead, the execution of judgment would be directed by the angels. So by means of this prophecy, we are allowed to see behind the scenes, as it were, into the heavenly realm itself. Jehovah had commissioned his angels not only to organize the destruction of the wicked but also to separate the righteous for survival.

In the past, we have explained that in the modern-day fulfillment of this vision, the man with the secretary's inkhorn represented the anointed remnant. It was thought that those who respond favorably to the message being preached are now marked for survival. In recent years, however, it has become clear that an adjustment needs to be made to this explanation. According to what is stated at Matthew 25:31-33, Jesus is the one who judges people. He makes his final judgment during the time of the great tribulation, separating the sheeplike ones, who will survive, from the goatlike ones, who will be destroyed.

So in light of this adjusted understanding, what lessons do we learn from Ezekiel's vision? There are at least five:

(1) During the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel served as a watchman along with Jeremiah, just as Isaiah had previously done. Today, Jehovah is using a small group of his anointed servants to feed his people and warn others before the outbreak of the great tribulation. In turn, all of Christ's domestics have a share in sounding the warning.—Matt. 24:45-47.

(2) Ezekiel was not involved with the actual marking of people for survival; neither are God's servants today. They simply convey Jehovah's message, which is a part of their preaching work, done under angelic direction.—Rev. 14:6.

(3) In Ezekiel's day, no one received a literal mark on his forehead. The same is true today. What do people need to do to be symbolically marked for survival? They need to react favorably to the preaching work that is taking place, put on the Christian personality, dedicate themselves to Jehovah, and loyally support Christ's brothers. (Matt. 25:35-40) Those who do these things will receive the mark of survival during the coming great tribulation.

(4) In the modern-day fulfillment, the man with the secretary's inkhorn represents Jesus Christ, the one behind the scenes who marks those who will sur-

vive. The great crowd will receive their mark when they are judged as sheep during the great tribulation. This will put them in line to receive everlasting life here on earth.—Matt. 25:34, 46.

(5) In the modern-day fulfillment, the six men with smashing weapons represent Jesus' heavenly armies with Jesus himself at the head. They will soon destroy the nations and all wickedness.—Ezek. 9:2, 6, 7; Rev. 19:11-21.

Understanding these valuable lessons strengthens our confidence that Jehovah does not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:9) We are also reminded of the importance of the preaching work in our day. Everyone needs to hear the warning before the end comes!—Matt. 24:14.

(Ezekiel 9:3, 4) Then the glory of the God of Israel rose from where it had rested above the cherubs and moved to the threshold of the doorway of the house, and he began calling out to the man who was clothed in linen, at whose waist was the secretary's inkhorn. **4** Jehovah said to him: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city."

(Ezekiel 9:5-7) And to the others he said in my hearing: "Go through the city after him and strike. Do not let your eye feel sorry, and do not feel any compassion. **6** Old man, young man, virgin, little child, and women you should kill off completely. But do not go near to any man on whom there is the mark. You should start from my sanctuary." So they started with the elders who were in front of the house. **7** Then he said to them: "Defile the house and fill the courtyards with the slain. Go!" So they went out and struck down people in the city.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 7:19) "'They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will become abhorrent to them. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them in the day of Jehovah's fury. They will not be satisfied, nor will they fill their stomachs, for it has become a stumbling block causing their error.

***w09* 9/15 23 ¶10**
The Excelling Value of Divine Education

10 Jehovah is in a unique position to help us prepare for the future because he knows what lies ahead. He determines what mankind's future will be. (Isa. 46:9, 10) Bible prophecy reveals that "the great day of Jehovah is near." (Zeph. 1:14) Regarding that day, the words of Proverbs 11:4 will prove true: "Valuable things will be of no benefit on the day of fury, but righteousness itself will deliver from death." When the time arrives for Jehovah's judgment to be executed on Satan's world, what will matter is our standing with God. Money will be worthless. In fact, Ezekiel 7:19 says: "Into the streets they will throw their very silver, and an abhorrent thing their own gold will become." That foreknowledge can help us to act wisely now.

(Ezekiel 8:12) He said to me: "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms where his idols are displayed? For they are saying, 'Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.'"

***w11* 4/15 26 ¶14**
Are You Allowing God's Spirit to Lead You?

14 Faith means, fundamentally, that Jehovah God is real to us. If God is not real to us, wrong conduct will be just a short step away. Consider what happened among God's people in ancient times. Jehovah revealed to the prophet Ezekiel that detestable things were being done in private, saying: "Have you seen, O son of man, what the elderly ones of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms of his showpiece? For they are saying, 'Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.'" (Ezek. 8:12) Did you notice what contributed to the problem? They did not believe that Jehovah was aware of what they were doing. Jehovah was not real to them.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 8:1-12) And in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, when I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah took hold of me there. **2** As I watched, I saw a form similar to the appearance of fire; there was fire below what appeared to be his waist, and from his waist upward his appearance was bright, like the glow of electrum. **3** Then he stretched out what appeared to be a hand and took me by a tuft of hair of my head, and a spirit carried me between the earth and the heavens and brought me to Jerusalem by means of the visions from God, to the entrance of the

inner gate that faces north, where the idolatrous symbol of jealousy that incites jealousy stood. 4 And look! the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance that I had seen in the valley plain. 5 He then said to me: “Son of man, please raise your eyes toward the north.” So I raised my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the gate of the altar, was this symbol of jealousy in the entryway. 6 And he said to me: “Son of man, do you see what terrible, detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that make me go far away from my sanctuary? But you will see detestable things that are even more terrible.” 7 Then he brought me to the entrance of the courtyard, and when I looked, I saw a hole in the wall. 8 He said to me: “Son of man, please bore through the wall.” So I bored through the wall, and I saw an entryway. 9 He said to me: “Go in and see the evil, detestable things that they are doing here.” 10 So I went in and looked, and I saw all sorts of images of creeping things and loathsome beasts and all the disgusting idols of the house of Israel; they were carved on the wall all around. 11 And 70 of the elders of the house of Israel were standing before them, with Ja·az·a·ni′ah the son of Sha′phan standing among them. Each one had his censer in his hand, and the perfumed cloud of incense was ascending. 12 He said to me: “Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms where his idols are displayed? For they are saying, ‘Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.’”

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

JULY 3-9

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 11-14

"Do You Have a Heart of Flesh?"

(Ezekiel 11:17, 18) "Therefore say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "I will also collect you from the peoples and gather you from the lands to which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. **18** And they will return there and remove from it all its disgusting things and detestable practices.

***w07* 7/1 11 ¶4**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

In 612 B.C.E., a vision transports Ezekiel to Jerusalem. What detestable things he sees happening in God's temple! When Jehovah sends his heavenly executional forces (represented by "six men") to express his anger at the apostates, only those who have received 'a mark on the forehead' will be spared. (Ezekiel 9:2-6) First, though, "coals of fire"—God's fiery message of destruction—must be tossed over the city. (Ezekiel 10:2) While 'Jehovah will bring upon the head of the wicked their own way,' he promises to regather the scattered ones of Israel.—Ezekiel 11:17-21.

(Ezekiel 11:19) And I will give them a unified heart, and I will put a new spirit in them; and I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh,

***w16.05* 15 ¶9**
How Do You Make Personal Decisions?

9 If we are to make wise decisions, as Jesus did, we must rely on Jehovah for guidance. We need to act in accord with these wise words: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not become wise in your own eyes. Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad." (Prov. 3:5-7) Getting to know Jehovah's thinking through Bible study can help us to perceive what God would want us to do in a particular situation. The more familiar we are with Jehovah's thoughts, the more our heart will become sensitive to his guidance.—Ezek. 11:19, ftn.

(Ezekiel 11:20) in order that they may walk in my statutes and observe my judgments and obey them. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God."'

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 12:26-28) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **27** "Son of man, this is what the people of Israel are saying, 'The vision that he sees is for a long time from now, and he is prophesying about the distant future.' **28** Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "'None of my words will be delayed; whatever I say will be done,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."'"

***w07* 7/1 13 ¶8**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

12:26-28. Even to those scoffing at his message, Ezekiel was to say: "There will be no postponement anymore as to any words of [Jehovah]." We must do all we can to help others put their confidence in Jehovah before he brings an end to this system of things.

(Ezekiel 14:13, 14) "Son of man, if a land sins against me by acting unfaithfully, I will stretch out my hand against it and destroy its food supply, and I will send famine upon it and cut off man and animal from it." **14** "'Even if these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were within it, they would be able to save only themselves because of their righteousness,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."

***w16.05* 26 ¶13**
Benefit Fully From Jehovah's Provisions

13 For example, consider Ezekiel 14:13, 14, where we read: "If a land sins against me by acting unfaithfully, I will stretch out my hand against it and destroy its food supply, and I will send famine upon it and cut off man and animal from it. 'Even if these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were within it, they would be able to save only themselves because of their righteousness,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah." By doing some research, we learn that this portion of Ezekiel was written in about the year 612 B.C.E. By that time, Noah and Job had been dead for centuries, and their record of faithfulness was in God's memory. But Daniel was still alive. In fact, he may have been in his late teens or early 20's when Jehovah said that he was just as righteous as Noah and Job. The lesson?

Jehovah notices and values the integrity of all his faithful worshippers, including those who are relatively young.—Ps. 148:12-14.

w07 **7/1 13 ¶9**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

14:12-23. Gaining salvation is our personal responsibility. No one can do it for us.—Romans 14:12.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 12:1-10) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, you are living in a rebellious house. They have eyes to see, but they do not see, and ears to hear, but they do not hear, for they are a rebellious house. **3** As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself luggage for going into exile. Then, during the day while they are watching, you must go into exile. Go into exile from your home to another place while they are watching. Perhaps they will take notice, even though they are a rebellious house. **4** Bring out your luggage packed for going into exile during the day while they are watching, and then in the evening while they are watching, you should leave like someone being taken into exile. **5** "While they are watching, bore a hole in the wall, and carry your belongings out through it. **6** While they are watching, put your belongings on your shoulder and carry them out in the darkness. Cover your face so that you cannot see the ground, for I am making you a sign to the house of Israel." **7** I did just as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my luggage as luggage for going into exile, and in the evening I bored a hole through the wall by hand. And when it was dark, I took out my belongings, carrying them on my shoulder right before their eyes. **8** In the morning the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **9** "Son of man, did not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, ask you, 'What are you doing?' **10** Tell them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "This pronouncement concerns the chieftain in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel within the city."'

JULY 10-16

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 15-17

"Do You Keep Your Promises?"

(Ezekiel 17:1-4) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, tell a riddle and relate a proverb about the house of Israel. **3** You must say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "The great eagle, with great wings, long pinions, and full, colorful plumage, came to Leb'a·non and took the top of the cedar. **4** He plucked off its topmost shoot and brought it to the land of traders and set it down in a city of traders.

w07 **7/1 12 ¶6**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the "tender one" transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle, Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off "a tender one," the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon "a high and lofty mountain," upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become "a majestic cedar," a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

(Ezekiel 17:7) "'"And there came another great eagle, with great wings and large pinions. This vine then stretched its roots eagerly toward him, away from the garden beds where it was planted, and it sent out its foliage toward him so that he would irrigate it.

(Ezekiel 17:15) But the king finally rebelled against him by sending his messengers to Egypt to obtain horses and a large army from them. Will he succeed? Will the one doing these things escape punishment? Can he break the covenant and still escape?'

w07 **7/1 12 ¶6**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the "tender one" transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle,

Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off "a tender one," the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon "a high and lofty mountain," upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become "a majestic cedar," a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

(Ezekiel 17:18, 19) He has despised an oath and broken a covenant. Even though he gave his promise, he has done all these things, and he will not escape."' **19** "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "As surely as I am alive, I will bring upon his head the consequences of despising my oath and breaking my covenant.

***w12* 10/15 30 ¶11**
Let Your Yes Mean Yes

11 Why has Jehovah had the above examples recorded for us in his Word? And how serious is the matter of letting our *Yes* mean Yes? The Bible clearly warns that a person who is "false to agreements" is among those who are "deserving of death." (Rom. 1:31, 32) Pharaoh of Egypt, Judean King Zedekiah, and Ananias and Sapphira are among the bad examples highlighted in the Bible of individuals whose *Yes* did not mean Yes. They all fared badly and stand as warning examples for us.—Ex. 9:27, 28, 34, 35; Ezek. 17:13-15, 19, 20; Acts 5:1-10.

***w88* 9/15 17 ¶8**
Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

8 Next, the rulers of Babylon and Egypt were likened to great eagles. One broke off the top of a cedar tree by removing King Jehoiachin and replacing him with Zedekiah. Although Zedekiah took a loyalty oath to Nebuchadnezzar, he broke it, seeking the military help of Egypt's ruler, the other great eagle. If Zedekiah invoked God's name in taking his oath, breaking it brought reproach on Jehovah. The very thought of bringing reproach on God should restrain us from ever proving false to our word. Privileged we are indeed to bear the divine name as Jehovah's Witnesses!—Ezekiel 17:1-21.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 16:60) But I myself will remember the covenant that I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you a permanent covenant.

***w88* 9/15 17 ¶7**
Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

7 Because of her unfaithful inhabitants, Judah was likened to a wild vine without good fruit and fit only for the fire. (Ezekiel 15:1-8) She was also likened to a foundling saved by God from Egypt and nurtured to womanhood. Jehovah took her as his wife, but she turned to false gods and would suffer destruction for her spiritual adultery. Yet, with faithful ones God would 'establish an indefinitely lasting covenant'—the new covenant with spiritual Israel.—Ezekiel 16:1-63; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:16.

(Ezekiel 17:22, 23) "'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "I will take a shoot from the top of the lofty cedar and plant it, from the top of its twigs I will pluck a tender shoot, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. **23** On a high mountain of Israel I will plant it; and its branches will grow, and it will produce fruit and become a majestic cedar. And every kind of bird will live beneath it and reside in the shadow of its foliage.

***w07* 7/1 12 ¶6**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the "tender one" transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle, Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off "a tender one," the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon "a high and lofty mountain," upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become "a majestic cedar," a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 16:28-42) "'Because you could not be satisfied, you then prostituted yourself to the sons of As·syr'i·a, but after prostituting yourself to them, you still did not find satisfaction. **29** So you increased your prostitution toward the land of traders and toward the Chal·de'ans, but even then you did not find satisfaction. **30** How sick your heart was,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'when you did all these things, behaving like a brazen prostitute! **31** But when you built

your mound at the most prominent place of every street and made your high place in every public square, you were not like a prostitute, because you refused any payment. 32 You are an adulterous wife who takes strangers instead of her own husband! 33 People give all prostitutes a gift, but you are the one who has given gifts to all those lusting after you, and you bribe them to come to you from all around to commit prostitution. 34 You are the opposite of other women who engage in prostitution. No one commits prostitution your way! You pay others, and they do not pay you. Your way is the opposite.' 35 "Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of Jehovah. 36 This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Because your lust has been poured out and your nakedness has been exposed during your prostitution with your lovers and all your detestable, disgusting idols to which you even sacrificed the blood of your sons, 37 therefore I am collecting together all the lovers you have given pleasure to, all those you loved together with all those you hated. I will collect them together against you from all around and expose your nakedness to them, and they will see you completely naked. 38 "'And I will punish you with the judgments that adulteresses and women shedding blood deserve, and your blood will be shed in rage and jealousy. 39 I will give you into their hand, and they will tear down your mounds, and your high places will be pulled down; and they will strip you of your garments and take your beautiful jewelry and leave you naked and exposed. 40 They will bring against you a crowd, and they will stone you and will slaughter you with their swords. 41 They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgment on you before the eyes of many women; and I will bring an end to your prostitution, and you will stop giving payment. 42 I will satisfy my rage against you, and my indignation will turn away from you; and I will be calm and no longer feel offended.'

JULY 17-23

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 18-20

"When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?"

(Ezekiel 18:19, 20) "'But you will say: "Why does the son not bear guilt because of his father's error?" Since the son has done what is just and righteous, has kept all my statutes and has observed them, he will surely keep living. 20 The soul who sins is the one who will die. A son will bear no guilt because of the error of his father, and a father will bear no guilt because of the error of his son. The righteousness of the righteous one will be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked one will be accounted to him alone.

***w12* 7/1 18 ¶2**
When God Forgives, Does He Forget?

Using the prophet Ezekiel as a spokesman, Jehovah proclaimed judgment against unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem. The nation as a whole had abandoned Jehovah's worship and filled the land with violence. Jehovah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. But in the midst of the judgment, Jehovah provided a message of hope. Each individual had a choice; each one was responsible for his own course of action.—Verses 19, 20.

(Ezekiel 18:21, 22) "'Now if someone wicked turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps my statutes and does what is just and righteous, he will surely keep living. He will not die. 22 None of the transgressions that he has committed will be held against him. He will keep living for doing what is righteous.'

***w12* 7/1 18 ¶3-7**
When God Forgives, Does He Forget?

What, then, if someone changed from doing bad to doing good? Jehovah said: "As regards someone wicked, in case he should turn back from all his sins that he has committed and he should actually keep all my statutes and execute justice and righteousness, he will positively keep living. He will not die." (Verse 21) Yes, Jehovah was "ready to forgive" a sinner who turned back from his wayward course, manifesting true repentance.—Psalm 86:5.

What about the sins he had committed? "All his transgressions that he has committed—they will not be remembered against him," Jehovah explained. (Verse 22) Notice that the repentant one's sins would "not be remembered *against him.*" Why is this significant?

In the Bible, the Hebrew word translated "remember" can mean more than just to recall the past. Regarding this word, one reference work says: "Quite often, in fact, [it] implies an action or appears in combination with verbs of action." Thus, "to remember" can mean "to act." Hence, when

Jehovah says of a repentant sinner that his sins "will not be remembered against him," He is saying that He will not thereafter *act against the individual* because of those sins, such as by accusing or punishing him.

The words of Ezekiel 18:21, 22 paint a touching picture of the extent of God's forgiveness. When Jehovah forgives our sins, he will never hold those sins against us in the future. Instead, he puts the sins of repentant ones behind him. (Isaiah 38:17) It is as if he wipes out the record of those sins.—Acts 3:19.

As imperfect humans, we need God's mercy. After all, we sin many times. (Romans 3:23) But Jehovah wants us to know that if we are sincerely repentant, he is willing to forgive. And when he forgives, he forgets—that is, he will not rehash our sins in order to accuse or punish us ever again. What a comforting thought! Does God's mercy move you to want to draw closer to him?

(Ezekiel 18:23) "'Do I take any pleasure at all in the death of a wicked person?' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'Do I not prefer that he turn away from his ways and keep living?'

(Ezekiel 18:32) "'I do not take any pleasure in the death of anyone,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'So turn back and live.'"

***w08* 4/1 8 ¶4**
Armageddon—God's War to End All Wars

Since God is the Judge, we can be sure that in every case the judgments against the wicked will be righteous. "Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" asked Abraham. The answer, Abraham learned, is that Jehovah is *always* right! (Genesis 18:25) Furthermore, the Bible assures us that Jehovah finds no delight in destroying the wicked; he does so only as a last resort.—Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

***w06* 12/1 27 ¶11**
What It Means to Love Our Neighbor

11 In showing love to those who do not serve God, we can do no better than to imitate Jehovah himself. Though he is no lover of wickedness, he shows loving-kindness to all by extending to them the opportunity to turn back from their bad ways and receive everlasting life. (Ezekiel 18:23) Jehovah "desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) It is his will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) That is why Jesus commissioned his followers to preach and to teach and to "make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19, 20) By our participation in this work, we show love for both God and neighbor, yes, including even our enemies!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 18:29) "'But the house of Israel will say: "The way of Jehovah is unjust." Is it really my ways that are unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?'

***w13* 8/15 11 ¶9**
Never Become "Enraged Against Jehovah"

9 **We do not know all the facts.** Because of not having all the facts, the Israelites in Ezekiel's day felt that Jehovah's way was "not adjusted right." (Ezek. 18:29) It was as if they had set themselves up as judges of God, putting their own standards of justice above Jehovah's and judging him based on their own limited understanding of events. If we at times do not fully understand a Bible account or the way events develop in our own life, could we perhaps feel in our heart that the way of Jehovah is unfair, "not adjusted right"?—Job 35:2.

(Ezekiel 20:49) And I said: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! They are saying about me, 'Is he not just speaking in riddles?'"

***w07* 7/1 14 ¶3**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

20:1, 49. The response of the older men of Israel shows that they were skeptical about what Ezekiel had said. May we never develop a doubting attitude toward divine warnings.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 20:1-12) Now in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, some of the elders of Israel came and sat down before me to inquire of Jehovah. 2 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: 3 "Son of man, speak with the elders of Israel, and tell them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "Are you coming to inquire of me? 'As surely as I am alive, I will not respond to your inquiry,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."' 4 "Are you ready to judge them? Are you ready to judge them, son of man? Make them know the detestable things that their forefathers did. 5 Tell them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "In the day I chose Israel, I also swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, and I made myself known to them in the land of Egypt. Yes, I swore to them and said, 'I am Jehovah your God.' 6 In that day I swore

that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt to a land that I had searched out for them, one flowing with milk and honey. It was the most beautiful of all the lands. 7 I then said to them, 'Each of you must throw away the detestable things that are before your eyes; do not defile yourselves with the disgusting idols of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God.' 8 "'"But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. They did not throw away the detestable things that were before them, and they would not abandon the disgusting idols of Egypt. So I promised to pour out my rage on them and to unleash my anger fully against them in the land of Egypt. 9 But I acted for the sake of my name so that it would not be profaned before the nations among whom they were living. For I made myself known to them before these nations when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. 10 So I brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. 11 "'"I then gave them my statutes and made my judicial decisions known to them, so that the man who follows them may have life by them. 12 I also gave my sabbaths to them as a sign between me and them, so that they would know that I, Jehovah, am the one sanctifying them.

JULY 24-30

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 21-23

"The Kingship Belongs to the One With the Legal Right"

(Ezekiel 21:25) "But your day has come, O fatally wounded, wicked chieftain of Israel, the time of your final punishment.

***w07* 7/1 13 ¶11**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

In the seventh year of exile, 611 B.C.E., the elderly ones of Israel come to Ezekiel "to inquire of Jehovah." They hear a long history of Israel's rebellion and a warning that 'Jehovah will bring forth his sword' against them. (Ezekiel 20:1; 21:3) Addressing the chieftain of Israel (Zedekiah), Jehovah says: "Remove the turban, and lift off the crown. This will not be the same. Put on high even what is low, and bring low even the high one. A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I shall make it. As for this also, it will certainly become no one's until he comes who has the legal right [Jesus Christ], and I must give it to him."—Ezekiel 21:26, 27.

(Ezekiel 21:26) This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Remove the turban, and take off the crown. This will not remain the same. Raise up the low one, and bring low the high one.

***w11* 8/15 9 ¶6**
They Waited for the Messiah

6 *The Messiah was to be born of Israel's tribe of Judah.* In his deathbed blessing of his sons, the patriarch Jacob foretold: "The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him the obedience of the peoples will belong." (Gen. 49:10) Many Jewish scholars of the past associated those words with the Messiah. Starting with the rule of Judean King David, the scepter (royal sovereignty) and the commander's staff (power to command) resided with the tribe of Judah. "Shiloh" signifies "He Whose It Is; He to Whom It Belongs." The regal line of Judah would end in "Shiloh" as the permanent kingly Heir, for God told Zedekiah, the last Judean king, that rulership would be given to one having the legal right to it. (Ezek. 21:26, 27) After Zedekiah, Jesus was the only descendant of David to whom kingship was promised. Before Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel told Mary: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom." (Luke 1:32, 33) Shiloh must be Jesus Christ, who was a descendant of Judah and David.—Matt. 1:1-3, 6; Luke 3:23, 31-34.

(Ezekiel 21:27) A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I will make it. And it will not belong to anyone until the one who has the legal right comes, and I will give it to him.'

***w14* 10/15 10 ¶14**
Have Unshakable Faith in the Kingdom

14 Consider what Jehovah promised King David of ancient Israel by means of the ***Davidic covenant.*** **(Read 2 Samuel 7:12, 16.)** Jehovah made this covenant with David during David's reign in Jerusalem, promising him that the Messiah would be his descendant. (Luke 1:30-33) Thus, Jehovah further narrowed the line of descent of the offspring and established that an heir of David would have "the legal right" to the throne of the Messianic Kingdom. (Ezek. 21:25-27) Through Jesus, David's kingship "will be firmly established forever." Indeed, David's

offspring "will endure forever; his throne will endure like the sun." (Ps. 89:34-37) Yes, the Messiah's rule will never become corrupt, and its accomplishments will last forever!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 21:3) Say to the land of Israel, 'This is what Jehovah says: "Here I am against you, and I will bring my sword out of its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked.

***w07* 7/1 14 ¶1**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

21:3—What is the "sword" that Jehovah brings forth out of its sheath? The "sword" that Jehovah uses to execute his judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah proves to be Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and his army. It could also include the heavenly part of God's organization consisting of mighty spirit creatures.

(Ezekiel 23:49) They will bring on you the consequences of your obscene conduct and of your sins with your disgusting idols; and you will have to know that I am the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.'"

***w07* 7/1 14 ¶6**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

23:5-49. Making political alliances led Israel and Judah to adopt the false worship of their allies. Let us guard against forming worldly ties that can destroy our faith.—James 4:4.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 21:1-13) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, turn your face toward Jerusalem, and make a proclamation against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. **3** Say to the land of Israel, 'This is what Jehovah says: "Here I am against you, and I will bring my sword out of its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. **4** Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be drawn from its sheath against all flesh, from south to north. **5** All people will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have drawn my sword from its sheath. It will not go back again."' **6** "And you, son of man, sigh while you tremble, yes, sigh bitterly before them. **7** And if they say to you, 'Why are you sighing?' you will say, 'Because of a report.' For it will certainly come, and every heart will melt with fear and every hand will hang limp and every spirit will become dejected and every knee will drip with water. 'Look! It will certainly come—it will take place,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah." **8** The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **9** "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what Jehovah says: "Say, 'A sword! A sword is sharpened, and it is polished. **10** It is sharpened to inflict a great slaughter; it is polished to flash like lightning.'"'" "Should we not rejoice?" "'Will it reject the scepter of my own son, as it does every tree? **11** "'It is given to be polished and to be wielded with the hand. This sword is sharpened and polished, to be put into the hand of an executioner. **12** "'Cry out and wail, son of man, for it has come against my people; it is against all the chieftains of Israel. These will be victims of the sword along with my people. So strike your thigh in grief. **13** For an examination has been made, and what will happen if the sword rejects the scepter? It will cease to exist,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

JULY 31–AUGUST 6

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 24-27

"A Prophecy Against Tyre Strengthens Confidence in Jehovah's Word"

(Ezekiel 26:3, 4) therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Here I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, just as the sea brings up its waves. **4** They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers, and I will scrape away soil and make her a shining, bare rock.

***si* 133 ¶4**
Bible Book Number 26—Ezekiel

4 Further proof of authenticity is to be found in the dramatic fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies against neighboring nations, such as Tyre, Egypt, and Edom. For example, Ezekiel prophesied that Tyre would be devastated, and this was partly fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar took the city after a siege of 13 years. (Ezek. 26:2-21) This conflict did not mean the complete end for Tyre. However, Jehovah's judgment was that it should be *totally* destroyed. He had foretold through Ezekiel: "I will scrape her dust away from her and make her a shining, bare surface of a crag. . . . Your stones and your woodwork and your dust they will place in the very midst of the water." (26:4, 12) This was all fulfilled more than 250 years

later when Alexander the Great moved against the island city of Tyre. Alexander's soldiers scraped up all the debris of the ruined mainland city and threw it into the sea, making a half-mile **[800 m]** causeway out to the island city. Then, with an intricate siegework, they scaled the 150-foot-high **[46 m]** walls to take the city in 332 B.C.E. Thousands were killed, and many more were sold into slavery. As Ezekiel had also predicted, Tyre became the 'bare surface of a crag and a drying yard for dragnets.' (26:14) On the other side of the Promised Land, the treacherous Edomites were also annihilated, in fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. (25:12, 13; 35:2-9) And, of course, Ezekiel's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel's restoration also proved to be accurate.—17:12-21; 36:7-14.

(Ezekiel 26:7-11) "For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Here I am bringing King Nebu·chad·nez′zar of Babylon against Tyre from the north; he is a king of kings, with horses, war chariots, cavalrymen, and an army of many soldiers. **8** He will destroy your settlements in the countryside with the sword, and he will build a siege wall and throw up a siege rampart against you and raise up a great shield against you. **9** He will pound your walls with his battering ram, and with his axes he will pull down your towers. **10** His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust, and the sound of the cavalry, the wheels, and the chariots will cause your walls to shake when he enters your gates, like men storming a city with broken walls. **11** The hooves of his horses will trample down all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will crash to the ground.

***ce* 216 ¶3**
The Bible—Is It Really Inspired by God?

3 Tyre was a prominent seaport of Phoenicia that had dealt treacherously with ancient Israel, her southern neighbor that worshiped Jehovah. Through a prophet named Ezekiel, Jehovah foretold its complete destruction over 250 years before it happened. Jehovah declared: "I will bring up against you many nations . . . And they will certainly bring the walls of Tyre to ruin and tear down her towers, and I will scrape her dust away from her and make her a shining, bare surface of a crag. A drying yard for dragnets is what she will become in the midst of the sea." Ezekiel also named in advance the first nation and its leader to besiege Tyre: "Here I am bringing against Tyre Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon."—Ezekiel 26:3-5, 7.

(Ezekiel 26:4) They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers, and I will scrape away soil and make her a shining, bare rock.

(Ezekiel 26:12) They will loot your resources, plunder your merchandise, tear down your walls, and pull down your fine houses; then they will throw your stones and your woodwork and your soil into the water.'

***it*-1 70**
Alexander

Instead of pursuing the fleeing Persians after two decisive victories in Asia Minor (the first at the Granicus River; the second on the Plain of Issus, where a great Persian army estimated at half a million met utter defeat), Alexander turned his attention to the island city of Tyre. Centuries earlier it had been foretold that the walls, towers, houses, and the very dust of Tyre would be pitched into the sea. (Eze 26:4, 12) It is, therefore, quite significant that Alexander took the rubble of the mainland city destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar some years before and built with it an 800-m (0.5 mi) causeway out to the island city. The pounding by his navy and engines of war destroyed that proud mistress of the sea in July 332 B.C.E.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 24:6) "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Woe to the city of bloodshed, the rusty cooking pot, whose rust has not been removed! Empty it piece by piece; do not cast lots for them.

(Ezekiel 24:12) It is frustrating and exhausting, For the heavy rust will not come off. Throw it into the fire with its rust!'

***w07* 7/1 14 ¶2**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

24:6-14—What does the rust of the cooking pot represent? Jerusalem under siege is likened to a widemouthed cooking pot. Its rust represents the moral filth of the city—the uncleanness, loose conduct, and bloodshed for which she is responsible. So great is her uncleanness that even standing the pot empty upon its coals and making it very hot fails to remove the rust.

(Ezekiel 24:16, 17) "Son of man, in a single blow I am about to take away your dear one from you. You should not mourn; nor should you weep or shed tears. **17** Groan in silence, and do not observe mourning rites for the dead. Bind on your

turban, and put on your sandals. You should not cover over the mustache, and do not eat the bread brought to you by others."

***w88* 9/15 21 ¶24**
Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

24 Next, Ezekiel was to act in an unusual way. (*Read Ezekiel 24:15-18.*) Why was the prophet to display no grief when his wife died? To show how stunned the Jews would be at the destruction of Jerusalem, her inhabitants, and the temple. Ezekiel had already said enough about such matters and would not speak God's message again until Jerusalem's downfall was reported to him. Similarly, Christendom and her hypocritical religionists will be stunned at the time of their destruction. And after the "great tribulation" begins, what the anointed watchman class had already said about her end will be enough. (Matthew 24:21) But when God's "sword" descends upon Christendom, such stunned religionists and others 'will have to know that he is Jehovah.'—Ezekiel 24:19-27.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 25:1-11) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, turn your face toward the Am′mon·ites, and prophesy against them. **3** You must say concerning the Am′mon·ites, 'Hear the word of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "Because you said 'Aha!' against my sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was laid desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile, **4** therefore I am giving you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their encampments within you and pitch their tents among you. They will eat your fruitage, and they will drink your milk. **5** I will make Rab′bah a pasture ground for camels, and the land of the Am′mon·ites a resting-place for the flock; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah."'" **6** "For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Because you clapped your hands and stamped your feet and you rejoiced over the land of Israel with such utter scorn, **7** therefore I will stretch out my hand against you to give you to the nations as something to plunder. I will cut you off from the peoples and destroy you from the lands. I will annihilate you, and you will have to know that I am Jehovah.' **8** "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Because Mo′ab and Se′ir have said, "Look! The house of Judah is like all the other nations," **9** I am exposing Mo′ab's flank at his frontier cities, the beauty of his land, Beth-jesh′i·moth, Ba′al-me′on, and clear to Kir·i·a·tha′im. **10** I will give it along with the Am′mon·ites as a possession to the people of the East, so that the Am′mon·ites will not be remembered among the nations. **11** And I will execute judgment in Mo′ab, and they will have to know that I am Jehovah.'

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

AUGUST 7-13

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 28-31

"Jehovah Rewarded a Pagan Nation"

(Ezekiel 29:18) "Son of man, King Neb·u·chad·nez′zar of Babylon made his army labor greatly against Tyre. Every head became bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare. But he and his army received no wages for the labor he expended on Tyre.

***it*-2 1136 ¶4**
Tyre

Destruction of City. In the course of Nebuchadnezzar's long siege against Tyre, the heads of his soldiers were "made bald" from the chafing of their helmets, and their shoulders were "rubbed bare" from carrying materials used in the construction of siegeworks. Since Nebuchadnezzar received no "wages" for serving as His instrument in executing judgment upon Tyre, Jehovah promised to compensate him with the wealth of Egypt. (Eze 29:17-20) According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the siege lasted 13 years (*Against Apion,* I, 156 [21]), and it cost the Babylonians a great deal. Secular history does not record exactly how thorough or effective Nebuchadnezzar's efforts were. But the loss in lives and property to the Tyrians must have been great.—Eze 26:7-12.

(Ezekiel 29:19) "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says, 'Here I am giving the land of Egypt to King Neb·u·chad·nez′zar of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth and take much spoil and plunder from it; and it will become wages for his army.'

***it*-1 698 ¶5**
Egypt, Egyptian

One Babylonian text, dated to Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year (588 B.C.E.), has been found that mentions a campaign against Egypt. Whether it relates to the original conquest or merely to a subsequent military action cannot be said. At any rate, Nebuchadnezzar received Egypt's wealth as his pay for military service rendered in Jehovah's execution of judgment against Tyre, an opposer of God's people. —Eze 29:18-20; 30:10-12.

(Ezekiel 29:20) "'As compensation for his labor against her, I will give him the land of Egypt because they acted for me,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

***g86* 11/8 27 ¶4-5**
Must All Taxes Be Paid?

To answer this, we might draw a parallel with the conduct of the Creator himself in paying a debt to a secular government for services rendered. Righteous indignation prompted Jehovah to decree the destruction of the ancient city of Tyre. In the accomplishment of this deed, God used the military might of Babylon under their emperor Nebuchadnezzar. Although Babylon was victorious, the engagement was costly. Jehovah thus felt that they should be paid for services rendered. His words appear at Ezekiel 29:18, 19: "Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar himself, the king of Babylon, made his military force perform a great service against Tyre. . . . But as for wages, there proved to be none for him and his military force from Tyre for the service that he had performed against her. Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'Here I am giving to Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon the land of Egypt, and he must carry off its wealth and make a big spoil of it and do a great deal of plundering of it; and it must become wages for his military force.'"

Bible students know that Nebuchadnezzar was a haughty, self-centered, pagan monarch. Babylon and its armies were known for their harsh treatment of captives. Jehovah did not approve of such conduct, yet to him a debt was a debt, and he paid in full.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 28:12-19) "Son of man, sing a dirge concerning the king of Tyre, and tell him, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "You were the model of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. **13** You were in E′den, the garden of God. You were adorned with every precious stone—Ruby, topaz, and jasper; chrys′o·lite, onyx, and jade; sapphire, turquoise, and emerald; And their settings and mountings were made of gold. They were prepared on the day you were created. **14** I assigned you as the anointed covering cherub. You were on the holy mountain of God, and you walked about among fiery stones. **15** You were faultless in your ways from

the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. **16** Because of your abundant trade, You became filled with violence, and you began to sin. So I will cast you out as profane from the mountain of God and destroy you, O covering cherub, away from the stones of fire. **17** Your heart became haughty because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom because of your own glorious splendor. I will throw you down to the earth. I will make you a spectacle before kings. **18** Because of your great guilt and your dishonest trading, you have profaned your sanctuaries. I will cause a fire to break out in your midst, and it will consume you. I will reduce you to ashes on the earth before all those looking at you. **19** All who knew you among the peoples will stare at you in amazement. Your end will be sudden and terrible, And you will cease to exist for all time.”’”

***it*-2 604 ¶4-5**
Perfection

The first sinner and the king of Tyre. Human sin and imperfection were, of course, preceded by sin and imperfection in the spirit realm, as Jesus’ words at John 8:44 and the account in chapter 3 of Genesis reveal. The dirge recorded at Ezekiel 28:12-19, though directed to the human “king of Tyre,” evidently parallels the course taken by the spirit son of God who first sinned. The pride of “the king of Tyre,” his making himself ‘a god,’ his being called a “cherub,” and the reference to “Eden, the garden of God,” certainly correspond to Biblical information concerning Satan the Devil, who became puffed up with pride, is linked to the serpent in Eden, and is called “the god of this system of things.”—1Ti 3:6; Ge 3:1-5, 14, 15; Re 12:9; 2Co 4:4.

The anonymous king of Tyre, residing in the city claiming to be “perfect in prettiness,” was himself “full of wisdom and perfect [adjective related to Heb. *ka·lal′*] in beauty,” and “faultless [Heb., *ta·mim′*]” in his ways from his creation onward until unrighteousness was found in him. (Eze 27:3; 28:12, 15) The first or direct application of the dirge in Ezekiel may be to the line of Tyrian rulers rather than to any one specific king. (Compare the prophecy directed against the anonymous “king of Babylon” at Isa 14:4-20.) In that case, the reference may be to the early course of friendship and cooperation followed by the Tyrian rulership during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon, when Tyre even contributed toward the building of Jehovah’s temple on Mount Moriah. At first, therefore, there was no fault to be found in the official Tyrian attitude toward Jehovah’s people Israel. (1Ki 5:1-18; 9:10, 11, 14; 2Ch 2:3-16) Later kings, however, departed from this “faultless” course, and Tyre came in for condemnation by God’s prophets Joel and Amos, as well as Ezekiel. (Joe 3:4-8; Am 1:9, 10) Aside from the evident similarity of the course of “the king of Tyre” with that of God’s principal Adversary, the prophecy illustrates again how “perfection” and “faultlessness” can be used in limited senses.

(Ezekiel 30:13, 14) “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘I will also destroy the disgusting idols and bring an end to the worthless gods of Noph. There will no longer be a prince from the land of Egypt, and I will put fear in the land of Egypt. **14** I will desolate Path′ros and set a fire in Zo′an and execute judgment on No.

***w03* 7/1 32 ¶1-3**
What Happened to Them?

NOPH and No are Biblical names for Egypt’s once famous capitals of Memphis and Thebes. Noph (Memphis) was some 14 miles **[23 km]** south of Cairo, on the west side of the Nile River. In time, however, Memphis lost its status as Egypt’s capital. By the turn of the 15th century B.C.E., Egypt had a new capital, No (Thebes), located about 300 miles **[500 km]** south of Memphis. Among the many temple ruins of Thebes is that of Karnak, considered to be the largest structure ever built with columns. Thebes and its Karnak temple were dedicated to the worship of Amon, the chief god of the Egyptians.

What did Bible prophecy foretell regarding Memphis and Thebes? Judgment was pronounced against Egypt’s Pharaoh and its gods, especially the chief god, “Amon from No.” (Jeremiah 46:25, 26) The crowd of worshipers who flocked there would be “cut off.” (Ezekiel 30:14, 15) And so it turned out. All that is left of Amon’s worship are temple ruins. The modern town of Luxor is situated on part of the site of ancient Thebes, and other small villages exist among its ruins.

As for Memphis, little remains except for its cemeteries. Bible scholar Louis Golding says: “For century upon century the Arab conquerors of Egypt used the titanic ruins of Memphis as a quarry for the building of their capital [Cairo] on the opposite side of the river. So well have the Nile and the Arab builders between them done their work that for miles upon miles within the circuit of the ancient

city not a stone protrudes above the black soil." Truly, as foretold in the Bible, Memphis became "a mere object of astonishment . . . without an inhabitant." —Jeremiah 46:19.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 29:1-12) In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the 12th day of the month, the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, turn your face toward Phar′aoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. **3** Speak these words: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "Here I am against you, Phar′aoh king of Egypt, The great sea monster lying among the streams of his Nile, Who has said, 'My Nile River belongs to me. I made it for myself.' **4** But I will put hooks in your jaws and cause the fish of your Nile to cling to your scales. I will bring you up out of your Nile along with all the fish of the Nile that cling to your scales. **5** I will abandon you in the desert, you and all the fish of your Nile. You will fall on the open field, and you will not be gathered up nor be collected together. I will give you as food to the wild beasts of the earth and the birds of the sky. **6** Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will have to know that I am Jehovah, For they were no more support to the house of Israel than a piece of straw. **7** When they grasped your hand, you were crushed, And you caused them to tear their shoulder. When they supported themselves on you, you were broken, And you caused their legs to wobble." **8** "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "Here I am bringing a sword upon you, and I will cut off from you both man and beast. **9** The land of Egypt will become a desolate and devastated place; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah, for you have said, 'The Nile River belongs to me; I am the one who made it.' **10** So I am against you and against your Nile, and I will make the land of Egypt devastated and dry, a desolate wasteland, from Mig′dol to Sy·e′ne to the boundary of E·thi·o′pi·a. **11** Neither man nor livestock will pass through it on foot, and it will not be inhabited for 40 years. **12** I will make the land of Egypt the most desolate of lands, and its cities will be the most desolate of cities for 40 years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands."

AUGUST 14-20

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 32-34

"The Watchman's Heavy Responsibility"

(Ezekiel 33:7) "As for you, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman to the house of Israel; and when you hear a word from my mouth you must warn them from me.

***it*-2 1172 ¶2**
Watchman

Figurative Use. Jehovah raised up prophets who served as figurative watchmen to the nation of Israel (Jer 6:17), and they, in turn, sometimes spoke of watchmen in a symbolic way. (Isa 21:6, 8; 52:8; 62:6; Ho 9:8) These prophet-watchmen had the responsibility to warn the wicked of impending destruction, and if they failed to do so, they were held accountable. Of course, if the people were unresponsive and failed to heed the warning, their blood was upon themselves. (Eze 3:17-21; 33:1-9) An unfaithful prophet was about as worthless as a blind watchman or a voiceless dog.—Isa 56:10.

(Ezekiel 33:8, 9) When I say to someone wicked, 'Wicked one, you will surely die!' but you do not speak out to warn the wicked one to change his course, he will die as a wicked man because of his own error, but I will ask his blood back from you. **9** But if you warn someone wicked to turn back from his way and he refuses to change his course, he will die for his error, but you will certainly save your own life.

***w88* 1/1 28 ¶13**
Keep On Preaching the Kingdom

Avoiding Bloodguilt

13 The responsibility of Jehovah's dedicated Witnesses to warn people of God's coming judgment can be compared to that of Ezekiel in his time. He was designated a watchman to the house of Israel. His assignment was to warn the Israelites that execution was coming upon them if they did not turn away from their bad ways. If he as a watchman failed to sound the warning, execution would still come upon the wicked people, but their blood would be upon the head of the negligent watchman. In this Jehovah shows his attitude toward executing judgment: "I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living. Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die, O house of Israel?"—Ezekiel 33:1-11.

(Ezekiel 33:11) Tell them, '"As surely as I am alive," declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that someone wicked changes his way and keeps living. Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel?"'

(Ezekiel 33:14-16) "'And when I say to the wicked one: "You will surely die," and he turns away from his sin and does what is just and righteous, **15** and the wicked one returns what was taken in pledge and pays back what was taken by robbery, and he walks in the statutes of life by not doing what is wrong, he will surely keep living. He will not die. **16** None of the sins he committed will be held against him. For doing what is just and righteous, he will surely keep living.'

***w12* 3/15 15 ¶3**
Maintain Your Sense of Urgency

WHY IS OUR PREACHING URGENT?

3 When you consider what stands to be gained or lost as a result of our preaching, you probably feel an urgent need to speak to others about the good news. (Rom. 10:13, 14) God's Word says: "When I say to the wicked one: 'You will positively die,' and he actually turns back from his sin and carries on justice and righteousness, . . . he will positively keep living. He will not die. None of his sins with which he has sinned will be remembered against him." (Ezek. 33:14-16) Indeed, the Bible tells those who teach the Kingdom message: "You will save both yourself and those who listen to you."—1 Tim. 4:16; Ezek. 3:17-21.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 33:32, 33) Look! You are to them like a romantic love song, sung with a beautiful voice and skillfully played on a stringed instrument. They will hear your words, but no one will act on them. **33** And when it comes true—and it will come true—they will have to know that a prophet has been among them."

***w91* 3/15 17 ¶16-17**
Keep Pace With Jehovah's Celestial Chariot

Not Deterred by Indifference

16 Ezekiel also set a fine example by being obedient and not allowing himself to be deterred by indifference or ridicule. Similarly, by keeping up with the development of the pure language, we are attuned to the direction taken by the royal Chariot Rider. Thus we are equipped to respond to his commands, strengthened to be undeterred by the indifference or ridicule of those to whom we speak Jehovah's judgment message. As with Ezekiel, God has forewarned us that some people would actively oppose, being hardheaded and hardhearted. Others would not hear because they do not want to listen to Jehovah. (Ezekiel 3:7-9) Still others would be hypocrites, as Ezekiel 33:31, 32 states: "They will come in to you, like the coming in of people, and sit before you as my people; and they will certainly hear your words but these they will not do, for with their mouth they are expressing lustful desires and after their unjust gain is where their heart is going. And, look! you are to them like a song of sensuous loves, like one with a pretty voice and playing a stringed instrument well. And they will certainly hear your words, but there are none doing them."

17 What would be the outcome? Verse 33 adds: "And when it comes true—look! it must come true—they will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them." Those words reveal that Ezekiel did not give up because of lack of response. The apathy of others did not make him apathetic. Whether people listened or not, he obeyed God and fulfilled his commission.

(Ezekiel 34:23) I will raise up one shepherd over them, my servant David, and he will feed them. He himself will feed them and become their shepherd.

***w07* 4/1 26 ¶3**
Humbly Submitting to Loving Shepherds

3 The prophecy of Isaiah 40:10, 11 emphasizes the tenderness with which Jehovah shepherds his people. (Psalm 23:1-6) During his earthly ministry, Jesus too showed tender concern for his disciples and for people in general. (Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 6:34) Both Jehovah and Jesus deplored the ruthlessness of the shepherds, or leaders, of Israel, who shamelessly neglected and exploited their flocks. (Ezekiel 34:2-10; Matthew 23:3, 4, 15) Jehovah promised: "I will save my sheep, and they will no longer become something for plunder; and I will judge between a sheep and a sheep. And I will raise up over them one shepherd, and he must feed them, even my servant David. He himself will feed them, and he himself will become their shepherd." (Ezekiel 34:22, 23) In this time of the end, Jesus Christ, the Greater David, is the "one shepherd" whom Jehovah has appointed over all His servants on earth, both the spirit-anointed Christians and the "other sheep." —John 10:16.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 32:1-16) And in the 12th year, in the 12th month, on the first day of the month, the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: **2** "Son of man, sing a dirge concerning Phar′-aoh king of Egypt, and say to him, 'You were like a strong young lion of the nations, But you have been silenced. You were like a sea monster, thrashing about in your rivers, Muddying the waters with your feet and fouling the rivers.' **3** This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'By means of an assembly of many nations I will cast my net over you, And they will haul you up in my dragnet. **4** I will abandon you on the land; I will cast you onto the open field. I will cause all the birds of the sky to settle on you, And I will satisfy the wild beasts of the whole earth with you. **5** I will cast your flesh on the mountains And fill the valleys with your remains. **6** I will drench the land with your gushing blood up to the mountains, And it will fill the streams.' **7** 'And when you are extinguished I will cover the heavens and darken their stars. I will cover the sun with clouds, And the moon will not give its light. **8** I will darken all the shining luminaries in the heavens because of you, And I will cover your land with darkness,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. **9** 'I will distress the hearts of many peoples when I lead your captives to other nations, To lands that you have not known. **10** I will cause many peoples to be awestruck, And their kings will shudder in horror over you when I brandish my sword before them. They will tremble continually, each fearing for his life, On the day of your downfall.' **11** For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'The sword of the king of Babylon will come upon you. **12** I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty warriors, The most ruthless of the nations, all of them. They will bring down the pride of Egypt, and all her hordes will be annihilated. **13** I will destroy all her livestock beside her abundant waters, And no foot of a human or hoof of the livestock will muddy them again.' **14** 'At that time I will clear up their waters, And I will make their rivers flow like oil,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. **15** 'When I make Egypt a desolate wasteland, a land stripped of all that filled it, When I strike down all the inhabitants in it, They will have to know that I am Jehovah. **16** This is a dirge, and people will certainly chant it; The daughters of the nations will chant it. They will chant it over Egypt and over all its hordes,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."

AUGUST 21-27

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 35-38

"Gog of Magog Will Soon Be Destroyed"

(Ezekiel 38:2) "Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Ma′gog, the head chieftain of Me′shech and Tu′bal, and prophesy against him.

***w15* 5/15 29-30**
Questions From Readers

Who, then, is Gog of Magog? To answer that question, we need to search the Scriptures to find out who attacks God's people. The Bible speaks not only of the attack by 'Gog of Magog' but also of the attack by "the king of the north" and of the attack by "the kings of the earth." (Ezek. 38:2, 10-13; Dan. 11: 40, 44, 45; Rev. 17:14; 19:19) Do these represent separate attacks? Not likely. The Bible is no doubt referring to the same attack under different names. Why can we draw that conclusion? Because the Scriptures tell us that all the nations of the earth will be involved in this final attack that prompts the war of Armageddon.—Rev. 16:14, 16.

When we compare all these Scriptural references about the final attack on God's people, it becomes evident that the name Gog of Magog refers, not to Satan, but to a coalition of nations. Will this coalition be led by the figurative "king of the north"? We cannot say with any certainty. But this thought does seem to be in harmony with what Jehovah says about Gog: "You will come from your place, from the remotest parts of the *north,* you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly, a vast army."—Ezek. 38:6, 15.

(Ezekiel 38:14-16) "So prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "On that day when my people Israel are dwelling in security, will you not know it? **15** You will come from your place, from the remotest parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly, a vast army. **16** Like clouds covering the land, you will come against my people Israel. In the final part of the days I will bring you against my land so that the nations may know me when I sanctify myself through you before their eyes, O Gog."'

***w12* 9/15 5-6 ¶8-9**
How This World Will Come to an End

8 After false religion has been destroyed, God's servants will still be found "dwelling in security" and "without wall." (Ezek. 38:11, 14) What will happen to this seemingly defenseless group of people who continue to worship Jehovah? It appears that they will become the object of an all-out assault by "many peoples." God's Word describes that development as the attack by "Gog of the land of Magog." **(*Read Ezekiel 38:2, 15, 16.*)** How should we view that attack?

9 Knowing in advance about this attack on God's people does not make us overly anxious. Rather, our main concern is, not our own salvation, but the sanctification of Jehovah's name and the vindication of his sovereignty. In fact, Jehovah declared more than 60 times: "You will have to know that I am Jehovah." (Ezek. 6:7; see footnote.) Hence, we look forward with intense interest to the fulfillment of that outstanding aspect of Ezekiel's prophecy, trusting that "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." (2 Pet. 2:9) Meanwhile, we want to use every opportunity to strengthen our faith so that we will be able to keep our integrity to Jehovah no matter what tests we may face. What should we do? We should pray, study God's Word and meditate on it, and share the Kingdom message with others. By doing so, we keep our hope of everlasting life firm, like "an anchor."—Heb. 6:19; Ps. 25:21.

(Ezekiel 38:21-23) "'I will call for a sword against him on all my mountains,' declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'Every man's sword will be against his own brother. 22 I will bring my judgment against him with pestilence and bloodshed; and I will rain down a torrential downpour and hailstones and fire and sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many peoples with him. 23 And I will certainly magnify myself and sanctify myself and make myself known before the eyes of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah.'

***w14* 11/15 27 ¶16**
"Now You Are God's People"

16 After the destruction of Babylon the Great, there will be an all-out assault on Jehovah's people, and at that time we will need to be under the protection that Jehovah will provide for his servants. Since this attack will trigger the final part of the "great tribulation," it is Jehovah himself who will set the stage and choose the moment for this showdown. (Matt. 24:21; Ezek. 38:2-4) At that time, Gog will attack "a people regathered from the nations," Jehovah's people. (Ezek. 38:10-12) That attack will be the signal for the execution of Jehovah's judgments against Gog and his hordes. Jehovah will magnify his sovereignty and sanctify his name, for he says: "I will certainly . . . make myself known before the eyes of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah."—Ezek. 38:18-23.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 36:20, 21) But when they came to those nations, people profaned my holy name by saying about them, 'These are the people of Jehovah, but they had to leave his land.' 21 So I will show concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they have gone."

***w02* 6/15 20 ¶12**
Learn and Teach Christian Morality

12 The apostle highlighted a prime reason for learning and then applying the morality that you find in the Bible. The Jews' misconduct reflected on Jehovah: "You, who take pride in law, do you by your transgressing of the Law dishonor God? For 'the name of God is being blasphemed on account of you people among the nations.'" (Romans 2:23, 24) It is equally true now that if we ignore Christian morality, we dishonor its Source. Conversely, if we hold firmly to God's standards, it reflects well on him, honoring him. (Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:20) Your being aware of this can strengthen your resolve if you face temptations or situations where ignoring Christian morality might seem the easiest or most convenient way to act. Moreover, Paul's words teach us something else. Beyond being personally aware that your conduct reflects on God, as you teach others, help them to see that how they apply the moral standards that they are learning will reflect on Jehovah. It is not simply that Christian morality promotes contentment and protects one's health. It also reflects on the One who provided and encourages that morality.—Psalm 74:10; James 3:17.

(Ezekiel 36:33-36) "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'In the day that I cleanse you from all your guilt, I will cause the cities to be inhabited and the ruins to be rebuilt. 34 The desolate land that was lying desolate for everyone passing by to see will be cultivated. 35 And people will say: "The desolate land has become like the garden of E'den, and the cities that were in

ruins and desolate and torn down are now fortified and inhabited.” 36 And the nations that are left remaining around you will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have built what was torn down, and I have planted what was desolate. I myself, Jehovah, have spoken, and I have done it.’

***w88* 9/15 24 ¶11**
“They Will Have to Know That I Am Jehovah”

11 After a remnant returned to Judah, that desolated land was transformed into a fruitful “garden of Eden.” (*Read Ezekiel 36:33-36.*) Similarly, since 1919 Jehovah has transformed the once desolate estate of the anointed remnant into a fruitful spiritual paradise, now shared with the “great crowd.” Since this spiritual paradise has been populated with holy people, let each dedicated Christian work to keep it clean.—Ezekiel 36:37, 38.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 35:1-15) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: 2 “Son of man, turn your face toward the mountainous region of Se′ir, and prophesy against it. 3 Say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Here I am against you, O mountainous region of Se′ir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate wasteland. 4 I will turn your cities into ruins, and you will become a desolate wasteland; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah. 5 For you showed unrelenting hostility, and you gave the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their disaster, at the time of their final punishment.”’ 6 “‘Therefore as surely as I am alive,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘I will prepare you for bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you. Since it was blood that you hated, bloodshed will pursue you. 7 I will make the mountainous region of Se′ir a desolate wasteland, and I will cut off from it anyone passing through and anyone returning. 8 I will fill its mountains with the slain; and those slain by the sword will fall on your hills, in your valleys, and in all your streams. 9 I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities will not be inhabited; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah.’ 10 “Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two lands will become mine, and we will take possession of both,’ even though Jehovah himself was there, 11 ‘therefore as surely as I am alive,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘I will deal with you according to the same anger and jealousy that you displayed in your hatred toward them; and I will make myself known among them when I judge you. 12 You will then have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have heard all the insolent things you spoke against the mountains of Israel when you said, “They have been laid desolate and have been given to us to devour.” 13 And you spoke arrogantly against me, and you multiplied your words against me. I heard it all.’ 14 “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘The whole earth will rejoice when I will make you a desolate wasteland. 15 Just as you rejoiced when the inheritance of the house of Israel was laid desolate, that is how I will deal with you. You will become a desolate ruin, O mountainous region of Se′ir, yes, all of E′dom; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah.’ ”

AUGUST 28–SEPTEMBER 3

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | EZEKIEL 39-41

“Ezekiel’s Temple Vision and You”

(Ezekiel 40:2) By means of visions from God, he brought me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain, on which there was a structure like a city to the south.

***w99* 3/1 11 ¶16**
“Set Your Heart Upon” God’s Temple!

16 For an answer, let us go back to the vision itself. Ezekiel wrote: “In the visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel and gradually set me down upon a very high mountain, on which there was something like the structure of a city to the south.” (Ezekiel 40:2) The setting for this vision, the “very high mountain,” reminds us of Micah 4:1: “It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it peoples must stream.” When does this prophecy come into fulfillment? Micah 4:5 shows that this commences while the nations still worship false gods. In fact, it has been in our own time, “the final part of the days,” that pure worship has been lifted up, restored to its proper place in the lives of God’s servants.

(Ezekiel 40:3) When he brought me there, I saw a man whose appearance was like that of copper. He had a flax cord and a measuring reed in his hand, and he was standing in the gateway.

(Ezekiel 40:5) I saw a wall surrounding the outside of the temple. In the man's hand was a measuring reed six cubits long (to each cubit, a handbreadth was added). He began to measure the wall, and its thickness was one reed and its height was one reed.

***w07* 8/1 10 ¶2**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—II

40:3–43:17—What is significant about the measuring of the temple? The measuring of the temple is a sign that Jehovah's purpose concerning pure worship is sure to be fulfilled.

(Ezekiel 40:10) There were three guard chambers on each side of the east gate. The three were the same size, and the side pillars on either side were the same size.

(Ezekiel 40:14) Then he measured the side pillars, which were 60 cubits tall, as well as the side pillars in the gates all around the courtyard.

(Ezekiel 40:16) There were windows with narrowing frames for the guard chambers and for their side pillars inside the gate on each side. The interior of the porches also had windows on each side, and there were palm-tree figures on the side pillars.

***w07* 8/1 11 ¶4**
Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—II

40:14, 16, 22, 26. The wall carvings of palm trees in the entryways of the temple show that only those who are morally upright are allowed to enter. (Psalm 92:12) This teaches us that our worship is acceptable to Jehovah only if we are upright.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 39:7) I will make my holy name known among my people Israel, and I will not allow my holy name to be profaned any longer; and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel.'

***w12* 9/1 21 ¶2**
"The Nations Will Have to Know That I Am Jehovah"

"I shall no more let my holy name be profaned," Jehovah says. When humans blame him for injustice, they are profaning his name. How so? In the Bible, "name" often denotes reputation. One reference work says that God's name refers to "what is known of him—his revelation of himself; it also represents his fame, and then his honour." Jehovah's name embraces his reputation. What is known of Jehovah when it comes to injustice? He hates it! He also has compassion for its victims. (Exodus 22:22-24) When humans claim that God is responsible for the very things he abhors, they are sullying his reputation. They are thus "treating [his] name with disrespect." —Psalm 74:10.

(Ezekiel 39:9) The inhabitants of the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons —the bucklers and shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and lances. And they will use them to light fires for seven years.

***w89* 8/15 14 ¶20**
Opening Up the Way Back to Paradise

20 But what of all the war equipment that the nations will leave behind? In view of the symbolic indication of the length of time it will take to dispose of the combustible parts of them, the quantity will be enormous. (Ezekiel 39:8-10) Armageddon survivors may be able to adapt the materials of any remaining war relics of the nations to useful purposes. —Isaiah 2:2-4.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 40:32-47) When he brought me into the inner courtyard from the east, he measured the gate, and it was the same size as the others. **33** Its guard chambers, its side pillars, and its porch were the same size as the others, and there were windows on each side of it and its porch. It was 50 cubits long and 25 cubits wide. **34** Its porch faced the outer courtyard, and there were palm-tree figures on both of its side pillars, and eight steps led up to it. **35** He then brought me into the north gate and measured it; it was the same size as the others. **36** Its guard chambers, its side pillars, and its porch were the same as the others. It had windows on each side. It was 50 cubits long and 25 cubits wide. **37** Its side pillars faced the outer courtyard, and there were palm-tree figures on both of its side pillars, and eight steps led up to it. **38** A dining room with its entrance was near the side pillars of the gates, where the whole burnt offerings were washed. **39** There were two tables on each side of the porch of the gate on which to slaughter the whole burnt offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings. **40** On the way up to the north gate, there were two tables outside the entrance. There were also two tables on the other side of the porch of the gate. **41** There were four tables

on each side of the gate—eight tables in all—on which the sacrifices were slaughtered. 42 The four tables for the whole burnt offering were of hewn stone. They were one and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one cubit high. On them were kept the implements used to slaughter the burnt offerings and the sacrifices. 43 Shelves, one handbreadth wide, were attached all around the interior walls; and the flesh of the gift offerings would be placed on the tables. 44 Outside the inner gate were the dining rooms for the singers; they were in the inner courtyard near the north gate, facing south. Another dining room was near the east gate, facing north. 45 He said to me: “This dining room that faces south is for the priests who are responsible for the services in the temple. 46 The dining room that faces north is for the priests who are responsible for the service of the altar. They are the sons of Za′dok, those from the Levites who are assigned to approach Jehovah to minister to him.” 47 Then he measured the inner courtyard. It was 100 cubits long and 100 cubits wide, foursquare. The altar was in front of the temple.

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

SEPTEMBER 4-10

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 42-45

"Pure Worship Restored!"

(Ezekiel 43:10-12) "As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, so that they will feel ashamed because of their errors, and they should study its plan. 11 If they feel ashamed of all they have done, you should make known to them the ground plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits, and its entrances. Show them all its ground plans and its statutes, its ground plans and its laws, and write them down before their eyes, so that they may observe all its ground plan and carry out its statutes. 12 This is the law of the temple. The entire territory all around the top of the mountain is most holy. Look! This is the law of the temple.

***w99* 3/1 8 ¶3**
"Set Your Heart Upon" God's Temple!

3 This extensive vision, filling nine chapters of Ezekiel's book, provided exiled Judeans with a faith-strengthening promise. Pure worship would be restored! In the centuries since then, even down to our day, this vision has been a source of encouragement to lovers of Jehovah. How so? Let us examine what Ezekiel's prophetic vision meant to the exiled Israelites. It has four main components: the temple, the priesthood, the chieftain, and the land.

***it*-2 1082 ¶2**
Temple

Ezekiel's temple vision. In 593 B.C.E., in the 14th year after the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple therein, the priest-prophet Ezekiel, transported in vision to a high mountaintop, beheld a great temple of Jehovah. (Eze 40:1, 2) To humiliate and bring about repentance of the exiled Jews, also doubtless to comfort faithful ones, Ezekiel was instructed to relate everything he saw to "the house of Israel." (Eze 40:4; 43:10, 11) The vision gave careful attention to the details of measurement. The units of measure used were the "reed" (the long reed, 3.11 m; 10.2 ft) and the "cubit" (the long cubit, 51.8 cm; 20.4 in.). (Eze 40:5, ftn) This attention to measurement has led some to believe that this visionary temple was to serve as a model for the temple later constructed by Zerubbabel in the postexilic period. There is, however, no conclusive substantiation of this assumption.

(Ezekiel 44:23) "'They should instruct my people about the difference between what is holy and what is common; and they will teach them the difference between what is unclean and what is clean.

(Ezekiel 45:16) "'All the people of the land will make this contribution to the chieftain in Israel.

***w99* 3/1 10 ¶10**
"Set Your Heart Upon" God's Temple!

10 How all of this must have lifted the hearts of those exiles! Each family was assured of having an inheritance in the land. (Compare Micah 4:4.) Pure worship would occupy an exalted, central place there. And notice in Ezekiel's vision that the chieftain, like the priests, would live on land contributed by the people. (Ezekiel 45:16) So in the restored land, the people were to contribute to the work of those whom Jehovah appointed to take the lead, supporting them by cooperating with their direction. In all, this land was a picture of organization, cooperation, and security.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 43:8, 9) By putting their threshold next to my threshold and their doorpost beside my doorpost, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by the detestable things they did, so I exterminated them in my anger. 9 Now let them put their spiritual prostitution and the carcasses of their kings far away from me, and I will dwell among them forever.

***it*-2 467 ¶4**
Name

Israel's failure as God's name people to live up to his righteous commands constituted a profanation or defilement of God's name. (Eze 43:8; Am 2:7) Since the Israelites' unfaithfulness resulted in God's punishing them, this also gave opportunity for his name to be spoken of disrespectfully by other nations. (Compare Ps 74:10, 18; Isa 52:5.) Failing to recognize that the chastisement came from Jehovah, these nations wrongly attributed the calamities that befell Israel to the inability of Jehovah to protect his people. To clear his name of such reproach, Jehovah acted for the sake of his name and restored a remnant of Israel to their land.—Eze 36:22-24.

(Ezekiel 45:9, 10) “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘You have gone far enough, chieftains of Israel!’ “‘Put an end to your violence and oppression, and do what is just and righteous. Stop seizing the property of my people,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 10 ‘You should use accurate scales, an accurate e′phah measure and an accurate bath measure.

***it*-2 140**
Justice

Therefore, Jehovah has always rightly required that those desiring to gain his approval acquaint themselves with his standard of justice and follow it. (Isa 1:17, 18; 10:1, 2; Jer 7:5-7; 21:12; 22:3, 4; Eze 45:9, 10; Am 5:15; Mic 3:9-12; 6:8; Zec 7:9-12)

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 44:1-9) He brought me back by way of the outer gate of the sanctuary facing east, and it was shut. 2 Then Jehovah said to me: “This gate will remain shut. It is not to be opened, and no human will enter by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, has entered through it, so it must remain shut. 3 However, the chieftain will sit in it to eat bread before Jehovah, for he is a chieftain. He will come in through the porch of the gate, and he will go out through it.” 4 Then he brought me through the north gate to the front of the temple. When I looked, I saw that the glory of Jehovah had filled the temple of Jehovah. So I fell with my face to the ground. 5 Then Jehovah said to me: “Son of man, pay attention, watch, and listen carefully to everything I tell you about the statutes and the laws of the temple of Jehovah. Pay close attention to the entryway of the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary. 6 You must say to the rebellious house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “That is enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel. 7 When you bring foreigners who are uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, they profane my temple. You present my bread, fat and blood, while my covenant is being broken because of all your detestable practices. 8 You have not taken care of my holy things. Instead, you assign others to take care of the duties in my sanctuary.”’ 9 “‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “No foreigner living in Israel who is uncircumcised in heart and in flesh may enter my sanctuary.”’

SEPTEMBER 11-17

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | EZEKIEL 46-48

“Blessings That Restored Israel Would Enjoy”

(Ezekiel 47:1) Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and there I saw water flowing eastward from under the threshold of the temple, for the front of the temple was facing east. The water was flowing down from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.

(Ezekiel 47:7-12) When I returned, I saw that on the bank of the stream were very many trees on both sides. 8 Then he said to me: “This water flows toward the eastern region and continues down through the Ar′a·bah and enters the sea. When it enters the sea, the water there will be healed. 9 Swarms of living creatures will be able to live wherever the waters flow. There will be an abundance of fish, because this water will flow there. The seawater will be healed, and everything will live wherever the stream goes. 10 “Fishermen will stand beside it from En-ged′i clear to En-eg′la·im, where there will be a drying yard for dragnets. There will be an abundance of many kinds of fish, like the fish of the Great Sea. 11 “It will have swampy places and marshy places, and these will not be healed. They will be abandoned to salt. 12 “All sorts of trees for food will grow on both banks of the stream. Their leaves will not wither; nor will their fruitage fail. Each month they will bear new fruit, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruitage will serve as food and their leaves for healing.”

***w99* 3/1 10 ¶11-12**
“Set Your Heart Upon” God’s Temple!

11 Would Jehovah bless their land? The prophecy answers this question with a heartwarming picture. A stream flows from the temple, widening as it goes, becoming a torrent by the time it enters the Dead Sea. There it revives lifeless waters, and a fishing industry flourishes on a stretch of the shoreline. Along the riverbanks are many trees that bear fruit year-round, giving nourishment and healing. —Ezekiel 47:1-12.

12 To the exiles, this promise echoed and confirmed earlier restoration prophecies that they held very dear. More than once, Jehovah’s inspired prophets had described a restored, repopulated Israel in paradisaic terms. Dead regions coming to life had

been a recurring prophetic theme. (Isaiah 35:1, 6, 7; 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35; 37:1-14) So the people could expect that Jehovah's life-giving blessings would flow forth like a river from the restored temple. Consequently, a spiritually dead nation would revive. The restored people would be blessed with outstanding spiritual men—men as righteous and firm as the trees along those visionary riverbanks, men who would take the lead in rebuilding a ruined land. Isaiah too had written of "big trees of righteousness" who would "rebuild the long-standing devastated places."—Isaiah 61:3, 4.

(Ezekiel 47:13, 14) This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: "This is the territory that you will assign as the land inheritance of the 12 tribes of Israel, and Joseph will have two portions. **14** You will inherit it and receive equal shares. I swore to give this land to your forefathers, and now it is assigned to you as an inheritance.

***w99* 3/1 10 ¶10**
"Set Your Heart Upon" God's Temple!

10 How all of this must have lifted the hearts of those exiles! Each family was assured of having an inheritance in the land. (Compare Micah 4:4.) Pure worship would occupy an exalted, central place there. And notice in Ezekiel's vision that the chieftain, like the priests, would live on land contributed by the people. (Ezekiel 45:16) So in the restored land, the people were to contribute to the work of those whom Jehovah appointed to take the lead, supporting them by cooperating with their direction. In all, this land was a picture of organization, cooperation, and security.

(Ezekiel 48:9, 10) "The contribution that you are to set apart to Jehovah will be 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 wide. **10** This will be the holy contribution for the priests. It will be 25,000 cubits on the north side, 10,000 on the west, 10,000 on the east, and 25,000 on the south. The sanctuary of Jehovah will be in the middle of it.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 47:1) Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and there I saw water flowing eastward from under the threshold of the temple, for the front of the temple was facing east. The water was flowing down from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar.

(Ezekiel 47:8) Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region and continues down through the Ar'a·bah and enters the sea. When it enters the sea, the water there will be healed.

(Ezekiel 48:30) "These will be the exits of the city: The northern side will measure 4,500 cubits.

(Ezekiel 48:32-34) "The eastern side will be 4,500 cubits long, and there are three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan. **33** "The southern side will measure 4,500 cubits, with three gates: one gate for Sim'e·on, one gate for Is'sa·char, and one gate for Zeb'u·lun. **34** "The western side will be 4,500 cubits long, with three gates: one gate for Gad, one gate for Ash'er, and one gate for Naph'ta·li.

***w99* 3/1 11 ¶14**
"Set Your Heart Upon" God's Temple!

14 Were these events the only fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision? No; something far greater is indicated. Consider: The temple that Ezekiel saw could not really be built as described. True, the Jews took that vision seriously and even applied some details literally. However, the visionary temple as a whole was too large even to fit on Mount Moriah, the site of the former temple. In addition, Ezekiel's temple was not in the city but some distance away on a separate tract of land, whereas the second temple was built where its predecessor had stood, in the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1, 2) Further, no literal river ever emerged from Jerusalem's temple. So ancient Israel saw only a token fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. This implies that there must be a greater, spiritual fulfillment of this vision.

(Ezekiel 47:6) He asked me: "Have you seen this, son of man?" Then he had me walk and return to the bank of the stream.

***it*-2 1001**
Son of Man

In the Hebrew Scriptures the most frequent occurrence of the expression is in the book of Ezekiel, where over 90 times God addresses the prophet as "son of man." (Eze 2:1, 3, 6, 8) The designation as so used apparently serves to emphasize that the prophet is simply an earthling, thus heightening the contrast between the human spokesman and the Source of his message, the Most High God. The same designation is applied to the prophet Daniel at Daniel 8:17.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 48:13-22) “Right next to the territory of the priests, the Levites will have a portion 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 wide. (The whole length will be 25,000 long and 10,000 wide.) **14** They should not sell, exchange, or transfer any of this choicest portion of the land, for it is something holy to Jehovah. **15** “The remaining area that is 5,000 cubits wide alongside the 25,000 cubit border will be for common use of the city, for housing and pasture ground. The city will be in the middle of it. **16** These are the city’s measurements: The northern border is 4,500 cubits, the southern border is 4,500, the eastern border is 4,500, and the western border is 4,500. **17** The pasture ground of the city will be 250 cubits to the north, 250 to the south, 250 to the east, and 250 to the west. **18** “The length of the remaining portion will correspond to the holy contribution, 10,000 cubits to the east and 10,000 to the west. It will correspond to the holy contribution, and its produce will provide food for those serving the city. **19** Those who are serving the city from all the tribes of Israel will cultivate it. **20** “The whole contribution is 25,000 cubits square. You should set it aside as the holy contribution along with the possession of the city. **21** “What remains on both sides of the holy contribution and of the possession of the city will belong to the chieftain. It will be alongside the 25,000 cubit borders that are east and west of the contribution. It will correspond to those adjoining portions, and it will be for the chieftain. The holy contribution and the sanctuary of the temple will be in the middle of it. **22** “The possession of the Levites and the possession of the city will be between what belongs to the chieftain. The chieftain’s territory will be between the boundary of Judah and the boundary of Benjamin.

SEPTEMBER 18-24

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | DANIEL 1-3

“Loyalty to Jehovah Brings Rewards”

(Daniel 3:16-20) Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go answered the king: “O Neb·u·chad·nez′zar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. **17** If it must be, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the burning fiery furnace, O king, and to rescue us from your hand. **18** But even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold that you have set up.” **19** Then Neb·u·chad·nez′zar became so furious with Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go that the expression of his face changed toward them, and he gave orders to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual. **20** He ordered some of the mighty men from his army to bind Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go and to throw them into the burning fiery furnace.

***w15* 7/15 25 ¶15-16**
Maintain Your Loyalty to God’s Kingdom

15 Sooner or later, all of Jehovah’s servants will find themselves in situations in which their conscience obliges them to stand out as different from those around them—whether colleagues, classmates, neighbors, relatives, or others. (1 Pet. 2:19) Yet, stand out we must! We should not be surprised if the world hates us for our stand; Jesus warned us that it would. Most opposers do not appreciate the importance of the issues involved in Christian neutrality. For us, though, these are matters of utmost importance.

16 Loyalty to Jehovah requires that we be steadfast in the face of threats. (Dan. 3:16-18) Fear of man can affect people of all ages, but young people may find it especially difficult to go against the flow, so to speak. If your children are facing such issues as the flag salute or nationalistic celebrations, do not hesitate to assist them. Use Family Worship sessions to help your children understand the issues involved so that they can meet those challenges courageously. Help them to express their personal convictions clearly and respectfully. (Rom. 1:16) To back up your children, take the initiative to speak with their teachers about these matters if necessary.

(Daniel 3:26-29) Neb·u·chad·nez′zar approached the door of the burning fiery furnace and said: “Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go, you servants of the Most High God, step out and come here!” Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go stepped out from the midst of the fire. **27** And the satraps, prefects, governors, and the high officials of the king who were assembled there saw that the fire had had no effect on the bodies of these men; not a hair of their heads had been singed, their cloaks looked no different, and there was not even the smell of fire

on them. 28 Neb·u·chad·nez′zar then declared: “Praised be the God of Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go, who sent his angel and rescued his servants. They trusted in him and went against the command of the king and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 I am therefore issuing an order that any people, nation, or language group that says anything against the God of Sha′drach, Me′shach, and A·bed′ne·go should be dismembered, and their houses should be turned into public latrines; for there is no other god who is able to rescue like this one.”

***w13* 1/15 10 ¶13**
Be Courageous—Jehovah Is With You!

13 In the seventh century B.C.E., three Hebrew servants of Jehovah were given clear evidence that God rewards faith and courage. King Nebuchadnezzar assembled Babylon’s dignitaries and demanded that they worship a towering image of gold. Any who would not do so were to die in a fiery furnace. The three Hebrews respectfully told Nebuchadnezzar: “Our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship.” (Dan. 3:16-18) The thrilling rescue of the three Hebrews is vividly described at Daniel 3:19-30. Although we are not likely to be threatened with death in a fiery furnace, we do face tests of integrity and can be sure that God will bless us for our faith and courage.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Daniel 1:5) Furthermore, the king assigned to them a daily ration from the king’s delicacies and from the wine he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to enter the king’s service.

(Daniel 1:8) But Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king’s delicacies or with the wine he drank. So he asked the principal court official for permission not to defile himself in this way.

***it*-2 382**
Meshach

There are three probable reasons why they considered the king’s delicacies ‘polluting’: (1) The Babylonians ate animals declared unclean by the Mosaic Law; (2) they would not be careful to see that the animals were properly bled, some perhaps being strangled; (3) the pagans often first sacrificed the animals to their gods, considering the eating of such meat as a part of worship of these gods.—Da 1:8; compare 1Co 10:18-20, 28.

(Daniel 2:44) “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. And this kingdom will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it alone will stand forever,

***w12* 6/15 17, box**
WHO MAKE UP “ALL THESE KINGDOMS”?

The prophecy at Daniel 2:44 states that God’s Kingdom “will crush and put an end to all *these* kingdoms.” That prophecy refers only to the kingdoms pictured by the various parts of the image.

What about all other human governments? The parallel prophecy in Revelation reveals the larger picture. It shows that “the kings of the entire inhabited earth” will be gathered against Jehovah on “the great day of God the Almighty.” (Rev. 16:14; 19:19-21) Hence, not only the kingdoms of the image but also all other human governments will be destroyed at Armageddon.

***w01* 10/15 6 ¶4**
The Key to a Happy World

The answer is found at Daniel 2:44: “In the days of those kings [ruling at the end of the present system] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. *It will crush and put an end to all these* [*man-made*] *kingdoms,* and it itself will stand to times indefinite.” Why will God’s Kingdom have to “crush” earthly rulerships? Because these insist on perpetuating the God-defying spirit of self-determination promoted by Satan back in the garden of Eden. In addition to working against mankind’s best interests, those who strive to perpetuate that spirit put themselves on a collision course with the Creator. (Psalm 2:6-12; Revelation 16:14, 16) Hence, we must ask ourselves, ‘Are we for or against rule by God?’

Bible Reading

(Daniel 2:31-43) “You, O king, were watching, and you saw an immense image. That image, which was huge and extremely bright, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was terrifying. 32 The head of that image was of fine

gold, its chest and its arms were of silver, its abdomen and its thighs were of copper, 33 its legs were of iron, and its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 You looked on until a stone was cut out, not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and of clay and crushed them. 35 At that time the iron, the clay, the copper, the silver, and the gold were, all together, crushed and became like the chaff from the summer threshing floor, and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a large mountain, and it filled the whole earth. 36 "This is the dream, and we will now tell the king its interpretation. 37 You, O king—the king of kings to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the might, the strength, and the glory, 38 and into whose hand he has given men wherever they may dwell, as well as the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and whom he has made ruler over all of them—you yourself are the head of gold. 39 "But after you another kingdom will rise, inferior to you; then another kingdom, a third one, of copper, that will rule over the whole earth. 40 "As for the fourth kingdom, it will be strong like iron. For just as iron crushes and pulverizes everything else, yes, like iron that shatters, it will crush and shatter all of these. 41 "And just as you saw the feet and the toes to be partly of clay of a potter and partly of iron, the kingdom will be divided, but some of the hardness of iron will be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with soft clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom will be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 Just as you saw iron mixed with soft clay, they will be mixed with the people; but they will not stick together, one to the other, just as iron does not mix with clay.

SEPTEMBER 25–OCTOBER 1

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | DANIEL 4-6

"Are You Serving Jehovah Continually?"

(Daniel 6:7-10) All the royal officials, prefects, satraps, high royal officers, and governors have consulted together to establish a royal decree and to enforce a ban, that for 30 days whoever makes a petition to any god or man except to you, O king, should be thrown into the lions' pit. 8 Now, O king, may you establish the decree and sign it, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be annulled." 9 So King Da·ri'us signed the decree and the ban. 10 But as soon as Daniel knew that the decree had been signed, he went to his house, which had the windows of his roof chamber open toward Jerusalem. And three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed and offered praise before his God, as he had regularly done prior to this.

***w10* 11/15 6 ¶16**

Young Ones—Be Guided by God's Word

16 Why should you want to obey Jehovah even when you are alone? Remember this: You are able either to hurt Jehovah's feelings or to make his heart rejoice. (Gen. 6:5, 6; Prov. 27:11) Jehovah is affected by your actions because "he cares for you." (1 Pet. 5:7) He wants you to listen to him so that you can benefit yourself. (Isa. 48:17, 18) When some of Jehovah's servants in ancient Israel ignored his counsel, they caused him to feel pain. (Ps. 78:40, 41) On the other hand, Jehovah felt deep affection for the prophet Daniel, for an angel called him a "very desirable man." (Dan. 10:11) Why? Daniel remained loyal to God not only when in public but also in private.—*Read Daniel 6:10.*

***w06* 11/1 24 ¶12**

Do You Share Jehovah's View of Sacred Things?

12 Not surprisingly, many things related to the lives of anointed members of the Christian congregation and their companions are held sacred. *Our relationship with Jehovah* is something sacred. (1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 36:7) It is so precious to us that we allow nothing and no one to come between us and our God, Jehovah. (2 Chronicles 15:2; James 4:7, 8) *Prayer* plays an important part in our maintaining a close relationship with Jehovah. Prayer was so sacred to the prophet Daniel that even at the risk of his life, he continued faithful in his custom of praying to Jehovah. (Daniel 6: 7-11) "The prayers of the holy ones," or anointed Christians, are likened to incense used in temple worship. (Revelation 5:8; 8:3, 4; Leviticus 16:12, 13) This symbolism underscores the sacredness of prayer. What a privilege it is to be able to communicate with the Sovereign of the universe! No wonder prayer is held sacred in our lives!

(Daniel 6:16) So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the pit of lions. The king said to Daniel: "Your God whom you are continually serving will rescue you."

(Daniel 6:20) As he got near the pit, he called out to Daniel with a sad voice. The king asked Daniel: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you are continually serving been able to rescue you from the lions?"

***w03* 9/15 15 ¶2**
Why Should We Pray Incessantly?

2 How did Jehovah view Daniel? When the angel Gabriel came to answer one of Daniel's prayers, he described the prophet as "someone very desirable" or "a man greatly beloved." (Daniel 9:20-23; *The New English Bible*) In the prophecy of Ezekiel, Jehovah referred to Daniel as a righteous man. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) Over the years, Daniel's prayers evidently resulted in a close relationship with his God, a fact recognized even by Darius.—Daniel 6:16.

(Daniel 6:22, 23) My God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions, and they have not harmed me, for I was found innocent before him; nor have I done any wrong to you, O king." 23 The king was overjoyed, and he commanded that Daniel be lifted up out of the pit. When Daniel was lifted up out of the pit, he was completely unharmed, because he had trusted in his God.

***w10* 2/15 18 ¶15**
"The Spirit and the Bride Keep On Saying: 'Come!'"

15 After Daniel had spent a night in the lions' pit, the king himself went there and cried out: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you are serving with constancy been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel immediately replied: "O king, live on even to times indefinite. My own God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions, and they have not brought me to ruin, forasmuch as before him innocence itself was found in me; and also before you, O king, no hurtful act have I done." Jehovah blessed Daniel for serving "with constancy." —Dan. 6:19-22.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Daniel 4:10, 11) "'In the visions of my head while on my bed, I saw a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was enormous. 11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached the heavens, and it was visible to the ends of the whole earth.

(Daniel 4:20-22) "'The tree that you saw that grew great and became strong, whose top reached the heavens and was visible to all the earth, 21 which had beautiful foliage, abundant fruit, and food for all, beneath which the beasts of the field would dwell and on whose branches the birds of the heavens would reside, 22 it is you, O king, because you have grown great and become strong, and your grandeur has grown and reached to the heavens, and your rulership to the ends of the earth.

***w07* 9/1 18 ¶5**
Highlights From the Book of Daniel

4:10, 11, 20-22—What was represented, or symbolized, by the immense tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? The tree initially represented Nebuchadnezzar as the ruler of a world power. Since the rulership extended "to the extremity of the earth," however, the tree must signify something far grander. Daniel 4:17 connects the dream to the rulership of "the Most High" over mankind. The tree, then, also symbolized Jehovah's universal sovereignty, especially with respect to the earth. Therefore, the dream has two fulfillments—in Nebuchadnezzar's rulership and in Jehovah's sovereignty.

(Daniel 5:17) Daniel then replied to the king: "You may keep your gifts and give your presents to others. However, I will read the writing to the king and make known its interpretation to him.

(Daniel 5:29) Then Bel·shaz'zar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and placed a gold necklace around his neck; and they heralded concerning him that he was to become the third ruler in the kingdom.

***w88* 10/1 30 ¶3-5**
Questions From Readers

When the Hebrew named Daniel was finally brought in, the king repeated his offer—to clothe Daniel with purple, to put a gold necklace on him, and to make him the third ruler in the kingdom. The prophet honorably replied: "Let your gifts prove to be to you yourself, and your presents do you give to others. However, I shall read the writing itself to the king, and the interpretation I shall make known to him." —Daniel 5:17.

So Daniel did not need to be bribed or paid to provide the interpretation. The king could keep his gifts or bestow them on someone else. Daniel would provide the explanation, not for a reward, but because he was empowered to do so by Jehovah, the true God, whose judgment on Babylon was impending.

As we read at Daniel 5:29, after Daniel had read and interpreted the words as he said he would, the king

ordered that the rewards be given to Daniel anyway. Daniel himself did not put on the clothing and the necklace. They were put on him by order of the absolute ruler, King Belshazzar. But this does not conflict with Daniel 5:17, where the prophet made it clear that his motive was not a selfish one.

***dp* 109 ¶22**

Four Words That Changed the World

22 Thus the riddle was solved. Mighty Babylon was about to fall to the Medo-Persian forces. Though crestfallen in the face of this pronouncement of doom, Belshazzar kept his word. He had his servants clothe Daniel with purple, bedeck him with a golden necklace, and herald him as the third ruler in the kingdom. (Daniel 5:29) Daniel did not refuse these honors, recognizing that they reflected the honor due Jehovah. Of course, Belshazzar may have hoped to soften Jehovah's judgment by honoring His prophet. If so, it was a case of too little too late.

Bible Reading

(Daniel 4:29-37) Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king was saying: "Is this not Babylon the Great that I myself have built for the royal house by my own strength and might and for the glory of my majesty?" 31 While the word was yet in the king's mouth, a voice came down from the heavens: "To you it is being said, O King Neb·u·chad·nez′zar, 'The kingdom has gone away from you, 32 and from mankind you are being driven away. With the beasts of the field your dwelling will be, and you will be given vegetation to eat just like bulls, and seven times will pass over you, until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that he grants it to whomever he wants.'" 33 At that moment the word was fulfilled on Neb·u·chad·nez′zar. He was driven away from mankind, and he began to eat vegetation just like bulls, and his body became wet with the dew of the heavens, until his hair grew long just like eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws. 34 "At the end of that time I, Neb·u·chad·nez′zar, looked up to the heavens, and my understanding returned to me; and I praised the Most High, and to the One living forever I gave praise and glory, because his rulership is an everlasting rulership and his kingdom is for generation after generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing, and he does according to his own will among the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth. And there is no one who can hinder him or say to him, 'What have you done?' 36 "At that time my understanding returned to me, and the glory of my kingdom, my majesty, and my splendor returned to me. My high officials and nobles eagerly sought me out, and I was restored to my kingdom, and even more greatness was added to me. 37 "Now I, Neb·u·chad·nez′zar, am praising and exalting and glorifying the King of the heavens, because all his works are truth and his ways are just, and because he is able to humiliate those who are walking in pride."

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

OCTOBER 2-8

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | DANIEL 7-9

"Daniel's Prophecy Foretold the Messiah's Arrival"

(Daniel 9:24) "There are 70 weeks that have been determined for your people and your holy city, in order to terminate the transgression, to finish off sin, to make atonement for error, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

***it*-2 902 ¶2**
Seventy Weeks

Transgression and sin terminated. Jesus' being cut off in death, his resurrection, and his appearance in heaven resulted in 'terminating transgression and finishing off sin as well as in making atonement for error.' (Da 9:24) The Law covenant had exposed the Jews as sinners, condemned them as such, and brought upon them the curse as covenant breakers. But where sin "abounded" as exposed or made evident by the Mosaic Law, God's mercy and favor abounded much more through his Messiah. (Ro 5: 20) By Messiah's sacrifice, transgression and sin of the repentant sinners can be canceled and the penalty thereof be lifted.

(Daniel 9:25) You should know and understand that from the issuing of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Mes·si'ah the Leader, there will be 7 weeks, also 62 weeks. She will be restored and rebuilt, with a public square and moat, but in times of distress.

***it*-2 900 ¶7**
Seventy Weeks

Messiah's Arrival After 'Sixty-Nine Weeks.' As to the following "sixty-two weeks" (Da 9:25), these, being part of the 70 and named second in order, would continue from the conclusion of the "seven weeks." Therefore, the time "from the going forth of the word" to rebuild Jerusalem until "Messiah the Leader" would be 7 plus 62 "weeks," or 69 "weeks"—483 years—from the year 455 B.C.E. to 29 C.E. As mentioned above, in the autumn of that year, 29 C.E., Jesus was baptized in water, was anointed with holy spirit, and began his ministry as "Messiah the Leader."—Lu 3:1, 2, 21, 22.

(Daniel 9:26, 27a) "And after the 62 weeks, Mes·si'ah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. "And the people of a leader who is coming will destroy the city and the holy place. And its end will be by the flood. And until the end there will be war; what is decided upon is desolations. **27** "And he will keep the covenant in force for the many for one week; and at the half of the week, he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease.

***it*-2 901 ¶2**
Seventy Weeks

"Cut off" at the half of the week. Gabriel further said to Daniel: "After the sixty-two weeks Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for himself." (Da 9:26) It was sometime after the end of the 'seven plus sixty-two weeks,' actually about three and a half years afterward, that Christ was cut off in death on a torture stake, giving up all that he had, as a ransom for mankind. (Isa 53:8) Evidence indicates that the first half of the "week" was spent by Jesus in the ministry. On one occasion, likely in the fall of 32 C.E., he gave an illustration, apparently speaking of the Jewish nation as a fig tree (compare Mt 17:15-20; 21:18, 19, 43) that had borne no fruit for "three years." The vinedresser said to the owner of the vineyard: "Master, let it alone also this year, until I dig around it and put on manure; and if then it produces fruit in the future, well and good; but if not, you shall cut it down." (Lu 13:6-9) He may have referred here to the time period of his own ministry to that unresponsive nation, which ministry had continued at that point for about three years and was to continue into a fourth year.

***it*-2 901 ¶5**
Seventy Weeks

"The half of the week" would be at the middle of seven years, or after three and a half years within that "week" of years. Since the 70th "week" began about the *fall* of 29 C.E. at Jesus' baptism and anointing to be Christ, half of that week (three and a half years) would extend to the *spring* of 33 C.E., or Passover time (Nisan 14) of that year. This day appears to have been April 1, 33 C.E., according to the Gregorian calendar. (See LORD'S EVENING MEAL [Time of Its Institution].) The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus 'came to do the will of God,' which was to 'do away with what is first [the sacrifices and offerings according to the Law] that he may establish what is second.' This he did by offering as a sacrifice his own body.—Heb 10:1-10.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Daniel 9:24) "There are 70 weeks that have been determined for your people and your holy city, in order to terminate the transgression, to finish off sin, to make atonement for error, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies.

***w01* 5/15 27**
Questions From Readers

When was "the Holy of Holies" anointed, as foretold at Daniel 9:24?
Daniel 9:24-27 is a prophecy concerning the appearance of "Messiah the Leader"—the Christ. The foretold anointing of "the Holy of Holies," then, does not refer to the anointing of the Most Holy compartment of the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, the expression "Holy of Holies" refers to the heavenly sanctuary of God—the heavenly Most Holy—in the great spiritual temple of Jehovah.—Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:2-10, 23.

When did God's spiritual temple begin to operate? Well, consider what took place when Jesus presented himself for baptism in 29 C.E. From that point on in his life, Jesus fulfilled the words of Psalm 40:6-8. The apostle Paul later indicated that Jesus had prayed to God: "Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me." (Hebrews 10:5) Jesus knew that God "did not want" animal sacrifices to continue to be offered at Jerusalem's temple. Instead, Jehovah had prepared a perfect human body for Jesus to offer as a sacrifice. Expressing his heartfelt desire, Jesus continued: "Look! I am come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7) And what was Jehovah's response? The Gospel of Matthew states: "After being baptized Jesus immediately came up from the water; and, look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw descending like a dove God's spirit coming upon him. Look! Also, there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.' "—Matthew 3:16, 17.

Jehovah God's acceptance of the presentation of Jesus' body for sacrifice meant that an altar greater than the literal altar in Jerusalem's temple had come into existence. This was an altar of God's "will," or arrangement for accepting Jesus' human life as a sacrifice. (Hebrews 10:10) The anointing of Jesus with holy spirit meant that God had now brought forth his entire spiritual temple arrangement. Hence, at the time of Jesus' baptism, God's heavenly abode was anointed, or set apart, as "the Holy of Holies" in the great spiritual temple arrangement.

(Daniel 9:27) "And he will keep the covenant in force for the many for one week; and at the half of the week, he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease. "And on the wing of disgusting things there will be the one causing desolation; and until an extermination, what was decided on will be poured out also on the one lying desolate."

***w07* 9/1 20 ¶4**
Highlights From the Book of Daniel

9:27—What covenant was 'kept in force for the many' until the end of the 70th week of years, or 36 C.E.? The Law covenant was removed in 33 C.E. when Jesus was impaled. But by keeping the Abrahamic covenant in force toward fleshly Israel until 36 C.E., Jehovah extended the period of special favor to the Jews on the basis of their being descendants of Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant continues in force with regard to "the Israel of God." —Galatians 3:7-9, 14-18, 29; 6:16.

Bible Reading

(Daniel 7:1-10) In the first year of King Bel·shaz′zar of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream; he recorded a complete account of the matters. **2** Daniel declared: "I was watching in my visions during the night, and look! the four winds of the heavens were stirring up the vast sea. **3** And four huge beasts came out of the sea, each different from the others. **4** "The first one was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were plucked out, and it was lifted up from the earth and was made to stand up on two feet like a man, and it was given the heart of a man. **5** "And look! another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Get up, eat much flesh.' **6** "After this I kept watching, and look! another beast, like a leopard, but on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. And the beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. **7** "After this I kept watching in the visions of the night, and I saw a fourth beast, fearsome and terrifying and unusually strong, and it had large iron teeth. It was devouring and crushing, and what was left it

trampled down with its feet. It was different from all the other beasts that were prior to it, and it had ten horns. 8 While I considered the horns, look! another horn, a small one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were plucked up from before it. And look! there were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and there was a mouth speaking arrogantly. 9 "I kept watching until thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days sat down. His clothing was white like snow, and the hair of his head was like clean wool. His throne was flames of fire; its wheels were a burning fire. 10 A stream of fire was flowing and going out from before him. A thousand thousands kept ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The Court took its seat, and books were opened.

OCTOBER 9-15

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | DANIEL 10-12

"Jehovah Foresaw the Future of Kings"

(Daniel 11:2) What I will tell you now is the truth: "Look! Three more kings will stand up for Persia, and the fourth one will amass greater riches than all others. And when he becomes strong by means of his riches, he will rouse up everything against the kingdom of Greece.

***dp* 212-213 ¶5-6**
Two Kings in Conflict

5 The first three kings were Cyrus the Great, Cambyses II, and Darius I (Hystaspes). Since Bardiya (or perhaps a pretender named Gaumata) ruled for only seven months, the prophecy did not take his brief reign into consideration. In 490 B.C.E., the third king, Darius I, attempted to invade Greece for the second time. However, the Persians were routed at Marathon and retreated to Asia Minor. Though Darius made careful preparations for a further campaign against Greece, he could not carry it out before his death four years later. That was left up to his son and successor, the "fourth" king, Xerxes I. He was the King Ahasuerus who married Esther.—Esther 1:1; 2:15-17.

6 Xerxes I did indeed "rouse up everything against the kingdom of Greece," that is, the independent Grecian states as a group. "Urged on by ambitious courtiers," says the book *The Medes and Persians —Conquerors and Diplomats,* "Xerxes launched an assault by land and sea." Greek historian Herodotus, of the fifth century B.C.E., writes that "no other expedition compared to this seems of any account." His record states that the sea force "amounted in all to 517,610 men. The number of the foot soldiers was 1,700,000; that of the horsemen 80,000; to which must be added the Arabs who rode on camels, and the Libyans who fought in chariots, whom I reckon at 20,000. The whole number, therefore, of the land and sea forces added together amounts to 2,317,610 men."

(Daniel 11:3) "And a mighty king will stand up and rule with extensive dominion and do as he pleases.

***dp* 213 ¶8**
Two Kings in Conflict

8 "A mighty king will certainly stand up and rule with extensive dominion and do according to his will," said the angel. (Daniel 11:3) Twenty-year-old Alexander 'stood up' as king of Macedonia in 336 B.C.E. He did become "a mighty king"—Alexander the Great. Driven by a plan of his father, Philip II, he took the Persian provinces in the Middle East. Crossing the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, his 47,000 men scattered the 250,000 troops of Darius III at Gaugamela. Subsequently, Darius fled and was murdered, ending the Persian dynasty. Greece now became the world power, and Alexander 'ruled with extensive dominion and did according to his will.'

(Daniel 11:4) But when he has stood up, his kingdom will be broken and be divided toward the four winds of the heavens, but not to his descendants and not like the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom will be uprooted and go to others besides these.

***dp* 214 ¶11**
Two Kings in Conflict

11 Following the death of Alexander, his kingdom was "divided toward the four winds." His many generals quarreled among themselves as they grabbed for territory. One-eyed General Antigonus I tried to bring all of Alexander's empire under his control. But he was killed in a battle at Ipsus in Phrygia. By the year 301 B.C.E., four of Alexander's generals were in power over the vast territory that their commander had conquered. Cassander ruled Macedonia and Greece. Lysimachus gained control over Asia Minor and Thrace. Seleucus I Nicator secured Mesopotamia and Syria. And Ptolemy Lagus took Egypt and Palestine. True to the prophetic word, Alexander's great empire was divided into four Hellenistic kingdoms.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Daniel 12:3) "And those having insight will shine as brightly as the expanse of heaven, and those bringing the many to righteousness like the stars, forever and ever.

***w13* 7/15 13 ¶16, endnote**
"Look! I Am With You All the Days"

Daniel 12:3 states that "the ones having insight [anointed Christians] will shine like the brightness of the expanse." While still on earth, they do this by sharing in the preaching work. However, Matthew 13:43 points to the time when they will shine brightly in the heavenly Kingdom. Previously, we thought that both scriptures referred to the same activity —the preaching work.

(Daniel 12:13) "But as for you, go on to the end. You will rest, but you will stand up for your lot at the end of the days."

***dp* 315 ¶18**
Jehovah Promises Daniel a Wonderful Reward

18 The book of Daniel closes with one of the most beautiful promises God has ever made to a human. Jehovah's angel told Daniel: "You will stand up for your lot at the end of the days." What did the angel mean? Well, since the "rest" he had just referred to was death, the promise that Daniel would "stand up" at some later time could mean only one thing —resurrection! In fact, some scholars have asserted that Daniel chapter 12 contains the first explicit reference to resurrection to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. (Daniel 12:2) In this, though, they are wrong. Daniel was very familiar with the resurrection hope.

Bible Reading

(Daniel 11:28-39) "And he will go back to his land with a great amount of goods, and his heart will be against the holy covenant. He will act effectively and go back to his land. **29** "At the time appointed he will return and come against the south. But this time will not be as it was before, **30** for the ships of Kit'tim will come against him, and he will be humbled. "He will go back and hurl denunciations against the holy covenant and act effectively; and he will go back and will give attention to those leaving the holy covenant. **31** And arms will stand up, proceeding from him; and they will profane the sanctuary, the fortress, and remove the constant feature. "And they will put in place the disgusting thing that causes desolation. **32** "And those who act wickedly against the covenant, he will lead into apostasy by means of smooth words. But the people who know their God will prevail and act effectively. **33** And those having insight among the people will impart understanding to the many. And they will be made to stumble by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plundering, for some days. **34** But when they are made to stumble, they will be given a little help; and many will join with them by means of smooth speech. **35** And some of those having insight will be made to stumble, in order to do a refining work because of them and to do a cleansing and a whitening until the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed. **36** "The king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god; and against the God of gods he will speak astonishing things. And he will prove successful until the denunciation comes to a finish; because what is determined must take place. **37** He will show no regard for the God of his fathers; nor will he show regard for the desire of women or for any other god, but he will magnify himself over everyone. **38** But instead he will give glory to the god of fortresses; to a god that his fathers did not know he will give glory by means of gold and silver and precious stones and desirable things. **39** He will act effectively against the most fortified strongholds, along with a foreign god. He will give great glory to those who give him recognition, and he will make them rule among many; and the ground he will apportion out for a price.

OCTOBER 16-22

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HOSEA 1-7

"Jehovah Delights in Loyal Love—Do You?"

(Hosea 6:4, 5) "What should I do with you, E'phra·im? What should I do with you, Judah? For your loyal love is like the morning clouds, Like the dew that quickly vanishes. **5** That is why I will cut them down by means of the prophets; I will kill them with the words of my mouth. And the judgments on you will shine as the light.

***w10* 8/15 25 ¶18**
Let "the Law of Loving-Kindness" Safeguard Your Tongue

18 Loyal love should be evident in all our dealings with fellow worshippers of Jehovah. Even under

difficult circumstances, the law of loving-kindness should not depart from our tongue. When the loving-kindness of the sons of Israel became "like the dew that early goes away," Jehovah was displeased. (Hos. 6:4, 6) On the other hand, Jehovah takes pleasure in a regular pattern of loving-kindness. Consider how he blesses those who pursue it.

(Hosea 6:6) For in loyal love I delight, not in sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God, rather than in whole burnt offerings.

***w07* 9/15 16 ¶8**
Highlights From the Book of Hosea

6:6. Practicing sin is an indication of a lack of loyal love for God. No amount of spiritual sacrifices can compensate for this deficiency.

***w07* 6/15 27 ¶7**
Jehovah Values Your Obedience

7 In this connection, recall that in the past, Jehovah revealed to his ancient people that obedience was even more important than animal sacrifices. (Proverbs 21:3, 27; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 12:7) Why was that so, since it was Jehovah who had commanded his people to offer such sacrifices? Well, what is the motive of the one offering the sacrifice? Is he doing it to please God? Or is he merely following some ritual? If a worshipper is truly desirous of pleasing God, he will take care to be obedient to all of God's commands. God has no need of animal sacrifices, but our obedience is one thing of value that we can give him.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hosea 1:7) But I will show mercy to the house of Judah, and I will save them by Jehovah their God; I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."

***w07* 9/15 14 ¶7**
Highlights From the Book of Hosea

1:7—When was the house of Judah shown mercy and saved? This was fulfilled in 732 B.C.E., in the days of King Hezekiah. At that time, Jehovah ended the Assyrian threat to Jerusalem by having an angel slay 185,000 of the enemy's forces in one night. (2 Kings 19:34, 35) Jehovah thus delivered Judah, not "by a bow or by a sword or by war, by horses or by horsemen," but by an angel.

(Hosea 2:18) In that day I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals of the field, And with the birds of the heavens and the creeping things of the ground; I will rid the land of the bow and the sword and war, And I will make them lie down in security.

***w05* 11/15 20 ¶16**
Hosea's Prophecy Helps Us to Walk With God

16 God also fulfilled this promise: "I shall certainly conclude a covenant in that day in connection with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens and the creeping thing of the ground, and the bow and the sword and war I shall break out of the land, and I will make them lie down in security." (Hosea 2:18) The Jewish remnant who returned to their homeland lived in security, with nothing to fear from animals. This prophecy also had a fulfillment in 1919 C.E., when the remnant of spiritual Israel was freed from "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. They now dwell in security and enjoy life in a spiritual paradise with their companions, who hope to live forever on earth. Animalistic traits do not exist among these true Christians.—Revelation 14:8; Isaiah 11:6-9; Galatians 6:16.

***g05* 9/8 12 ¶2**
When Global Harmony Will Prevail

In fact, life on earth will experience a new type of harmony, for God will teach his loyal human subjects how to be good caretakers of their terrestrial home. He will even "conclude a covenant," as it were, with all predatory beasts, causing them to live in peaceful submission to humans.—Hosea 2:18; Genesis 1:26-28; Isaiah 11:6-8.

Bible Reading

(Hosea 7:1-16) "At the time when I would heal Israel, The error of E′phra·im is also exposed, And the wickedness of Sa·mar′i·a. For they practice deception; Thieves break in and marauder bands raid outside. 2 But they do not say in their heart that I will remember all their wickedness. Now their dealings are all around them; They are right in front of my face. 3 They make the king rejoice by their wickedness, And princes by their deceit. 4 All of them are adulterers, Burning like an oven fired by a baker, Who stops stirring the fire after kneading the dough until it is leavened. 5 On the day of our king, princes have become sick—They are enraged because of wine. He has reached out his hand to ridiculers. 6 For they approach with hearts burning like an oven. All night long the baker sleeps; In the morning the oven blazes

like a flaming fire. 7 All of them are hot like an oven, And they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen; No one among them calls out to me. 8 E′phra·im mixes with the nations. E′phra·im is like a round cake left unturned. 9 Strangers have consumed his strength, but he does not know it. And his gray hairs have turned white, but he does not notice it. 10 The pride of Israel has testified against him, But they have not returned to Jehovah their God, Nor have they looked for him despite all of this. 11 E′phra·im is like a simpleminded dove, lacking good sense. They have called out to Egypt; they have gone to As·syr′i·a. 12 Wherever they go, I will spread my net over them. I will bring them down like the birds of the heavens. I will discipline them according to the warning given to their assembly. 13 Woe to them, for they have fled from me! Devastation to them, for they have transgressed against me! I was ready to redeem them, but they have spoken lies against me. 14 From their heart they did not call to me for help, Although they kept wailing on their beds. For their grain and new wine they would slash themselves; They turn against me. 15 Although I disciplined them and strengthened their arms, They are against me, scheming what is bad. 16 They changed course, but not to anything loftier; They were as unreliable as a loose bow. Their princes will fall by the sword because of their defiant tongues. For this they will be an object of ridicule in the land of Egypt."

OCTOBER 23-29

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HOSEA 8-14

"Offer Your Very Best to Jehovah"

(Hosea 14:2) Come back to Jehovah with these words, Say to him, 'May you pardon our error and accept what is good, And we will offer the praise of our lips as we would young bulls.

***w07* 4/1 20 ¶2**
Offering Sacrifices That Please God

Furthermore, the Bible indicates that our expressions of praise can be viewed as sacrifices offered to Jehovah. The prophet Hosea used the phrase "the young bulls of our lips," showing that God considers the praise of our lips to be one of the finest sacrifices. (Hosea 14:2) The apostle Paul urged the Hebrew Christians: "Offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) Today, Jehovah's Witnesses stay very busy preaching the good news and making disciples of people of all nations. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) They are offering sacrifices of praise to God day and night around the earth.—Revelation 7:15.

(Hosea 14:4) I will heal their unfaithfulness. I will love them of my own free will, Because my anger has turned away from him.

***w11* 2/15 16 ¶15**
Gaining God's Approval Leads to Everlasting Life

15 A bull was the costliest animal that an Israelite could offer to Jehovah. Hence, "the young bulls of our lips" referred to sincere, well-thought-out words spoken in praise of the true God. How did Jehovah respond to those making such sacrifices? He said: "I shall love them of my own free will." (Hos. 14:4) To those offering such sacrifices of praise, Jehovah granted his forgiveness, approval, and friendship.

(Hosea 14:9) Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is discreet? Let him know them. For the ways of Jehovah are upright, And the righteous will walk in them; But the transgressors will stumble in them.

***jd* 87 ¶11**
Serve Jehovah According to His High Standards

11 Hosea 14:9 also turns our attention to the positive aspects of observing an upright course. Blessings and benefits come from measuring up to God's requirements. As the Creator, he knows our makeup. What he expects of us is for our good. To illustrate the relationship between us and God, we might think of an automobile and its manufacturer. The maker knows how the auto is designed and put together. He knows that the car requires an oil change every so often. What would happen if you ignored that standard, perhaps reasoning that the car is running well? Much sooner than might otherwise be so, the engine would deteriorate and fail. The same is true of humans. Our Creator has given us commandments. Keeping them is for our benefit. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Appreciating that we do benefit gives us additional reason to live up to his standards, to keep his commandments.—Psalm 112:1.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hosea 10:12) Sow seed for yourselves in righteousness and reap loyal love. Plow for yourselves arable land While there is time to search for Jehovah, Until he comes and instructs you in righteousness.

***w05* 11/15 28 ¶7**
"The Ways of Jehovah Are Upright"

7 *If we worship Jehovah in an unhypocritical and upright way, we will be recipients of his loving-kindness, or loyal love.* The wayward Israelites were told: "Sow seed for yourselves in righteousness; reap in accord with loving-kindness. Till for yourselves arable land, when there is time for searching for Jehovah until he comes and gives instruction in righteousness to you."—Hosea 10:12.

(Hosea 11:1) "When Israel was a boy, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called my son.

***w11* 8/15 10 ¶10**
They Waited for the Messiah

10 *Like the Israelites, the Messiah would be called out of Egypt.* (Hos. 11:1) Before Herod's death-dealing decree, an angel directed that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus go to Egypt. There they remained "until the decease of Herod, for that to be fulfilled which was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet [Hosea], saying: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" (Matt. 2:13-15) Of course, Jesus himself could not have orchestrated any of the foretold events associated with his birth and early life.

Bible Reading

(Hosea 8:1-14) "Put a horn to your mouth! One comes like an eagle against the house of Jehovah, For they have violated my covenant and transgressed against my law. 2 To me they cry out, 'My God, we, Israel, know you!' 3 Israel has rejected what is good. Let an enemy pursue him. 4 They have appointed kings, but not through me. They have appointed princes, but I did not recognize them. With their silver and their gold they have made idols, To their own destruction. 5 Your calf has been rejected, O Sa·mar'i·a. My anger flares up against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? 6 For this is from Israel. A craftsman made it, and it is not God; The calf of Sa·mar'i·a will be reduced to splinters. 7 For it is wind that they are sowing, And they will reap a storm wind. No stalk produces ripe grain; Whatever sprouts produces no flour. If any is produced, foreigners will swallow it down. 8 Israel will be swallowed down. Now they will be among the nations, Like an unwanted vessel. 9 For they have gone up to As·syr'i·a, like a lone wild donkey. E'phra·im has hired lovers. 10 Although they hire them from among the nations, I will now round them up; They will begin to suffer because of the burden imposed by king and princes. 11 For E'phra·im has multiplied altars to sin. They became his altars for sinning. 12 I wrote for him the many things of my law, But they were regarded as something strange. 13 They offer sacrificial gifts to me, and they eat the meat, But Jehovah takes no pleasure in them. Now he will remember their error and punish them for their sins. They have turned back to Egypt. 14 Israel has forgotten his Maker and has built temples, And Judah has multiplied fortified cities. But I will send fire into his cities, And it will consume the towers of each one."

OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 5

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | JOEL 1-3

"Your Sons and Your Daughters Will Prophesy"

(Joel 2:28, 29) After that I will pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, And your young men will see visions. 29 And even on my male slaves and female slaves I will pour out my spirit in those days.

***w02* 8/1 15 ¶4-5**
Stirred by "the Magnificent Things of God"

4 Having received the holy spirit, the disciples in Jerusalem lost no time in sharing the good news of salvation with others, beginning with the crowd who had gathered that morning. Their preaching fulfilled a remarkable prophecy, recorded eight centuries earlier by Joel, the son of Pethuel: "I shall pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will certainly prophesy. As for your old men, dreams they will dream. As for your young men, visions they will see. And even on the menservants and on the maidservants in those days I shall pour out my spirit . . . before the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah." —Joel 1:1; 2:28, 29, 31; Acts 2:17, 18, 20.

5 Did this mean that God was going to raise up a whole generation of prophets, both male and female, in the manner of David, Joel, and Deborah, and use them to foretell future events? No. Christian 'sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants' would prophesy in the sense that they would be impelled by Jehovah's spirit to declare "the magnificent things" that Jehovah had done and would still do. So they would serve as spokesmen for the Most High. How, though, did the crowd react?—Hebrews 1:1, 2.

jd **167 ¶4**
"Proclaim This, You People, Among the Nations"

4 Look at the matter from another standpoint. Jehovah God told the prophet Joel of a time when people of every sort would prophesy, so to speak: "After that it must occur that I shall pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will certainly prophesy. As for your old men, dreams they will dream. As for your young men, visions they will see." (Joel 2:28-32) On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter applied this passage to the pouring out of holy spirit upon those who were gathered in an upper chamber in Jerusalem and to their subsequent preaching of "the magnificent things of God." (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4, 11, 14-21) Now consider our time. Joel's prophecy has been undergoing its major fulfillment since early in the 20th century. Spirit-anointed Christians—male and female, old and young—began to "prophesy," that is, to declare "the magnificent things of God," including the good news of the Kingdom, now established in the heavens.

(Joel 2:30-32) And I will give wonders in the heavens and on the earth, Blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood Before the coming of the great and awe-inspiring day of Jehovah. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, just as Jehovah has said, The survivors whom Jehovah calls."

w07 **10/1 13 ¶2**
Highlights From the Books of Joel and Amos

2:32—What does it mean to 'call on the name of Jehovah'? To call on God's name means to know that name, to respect it deeply, and to rely upon and trust in the bearer of that name.—Romans 10: 13, 14.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Joel 2:12, 13) "Yet even now," declares Jehovah, "return to me with all your hearts, With fasting and weeping and wailing. 13 Rip apart your hearts, and not your garments, And return to Jehovah your God, For he is compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loyal love, And he will reconsider the calamity.

w07 **10/1 13 ¶5**
Highlights From the Books of Joel and Amos

2:12, 13. Genuine repentance is heartfelt. It involves an inward 'ripping apart of our hearts,' not an outward 'ripping apart of garments.'

(Joel 3:14) Crowds, crowds are in the valley of the decision, For the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of the decision.

w07 **10/1 13 ¶3**
Highlights From the Books of Joel and Amos

3:14—What is "the low plain of the decision"? It is a symbolic place for meting out God's judgment. In the days of Judean King Jehoshaphat, whose name means "Jehovah Is Judge," God delivered Judah from surrounding nations by confusing their military forces. Hence, the place is also called "the low plain of Jehoshaphat." (Joel 3:2, 12) In our day, it represents a symbolic location in which nations will be crushed like grapes in a winepress.—Revelation 19:15.

Bible Reading

(Joel 2:28–3:8) After that I will pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, And your young men will see visions. 29 And even on my male slaves and female slaves I will pour out my spirit in those days. 30 And I will give wonders in the heavens and on the earth, Blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood Before the coming of the great and awe-inspiring day of Jehovah. 32 And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, just as Jehovah has said, The survivors whom Jehovah calls."

3 For look! in those days and in that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather together all the nations And bring them down to the Valley of Je·hosh'a·phat. I will enter into judgment with them there In behalf of my people and my inheritance Israel, For they scattered them among the nations, And they divided up my land among themselves. 3 For my people they cast lots; They would trade a boy to hire a prostitute And sell a girl for wine to drink. 4 Also, what do you have against me, O Tyre and Si'don and all the regions of Phi·lis'·ti·a? Are you repaying me for something? If you are repaying me, I will swiftly, speedily bring your repayment on your heads. 5 Because you have taken my silver and gold, And you have brought

my finest treasures into your temples; **6** And the people of Judah and Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, In order to remove them far from their territory; **7** Here I am rousing them to come from the place where you sold them, And I will bring your repayment on your heads. **8** I will sell your sons and daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, And they will sell them to the men of She'ba, to a nation far away; For Jehovah himself has spoken it.

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

NOVEMBER 6-12

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | AMOS 1-9

"Search for Jehovah, and Keep Living"

(Amos 5:4) "For this is what Jehovah says to the house of Israel: 'Search for me and keep living.

(Amos 5:6) Search for Jehovah, and keep living, So that he does not burst out like a fire on the house of Joseph, Consuming Beth'el, with no one to extinguish it.

***w04* 11/15 24 ¶20**
Search for Jehovah, the Examiner of Hearts

20 It must not have been easy for anyone living in Israel in those days to remain faithful to Jehovah. It is difficult to swim against the current, so to speak, as Christians today, young and old, well know. Yet, love for God and a desire to please him did motivate some Israelites to practice true worship. Jehovah extended to them the warm invitation recorded at Amos 5:4: "Search for me, and keep living." Today, God similarly shows mercy to those who repent and search for him by taking in accurate knowledge of his Word and then doing his will. It is not easy to pursue this course, but doing so leads to everlasting life.—John 17:3.

(Amos 5:14, 15) Search for what is good, and not what is bad, So that you may keep living. Then Jehovah the God of armies may be with you, Just as you say he is. 15 Hate what is bad, and love what is good, Let justice prevail in the city gate. It may be that Jehovah the God of armies Will show favor to the remaining ones of Joseph.'

***jd* 90-91 ¶16-17**
Serve Jehovah According to His High Standards

16 The first man, Adam, made a foolish choice as to whose standards of good and bad were best. Will we choose more wisely? Amos admonished us to have strong feelings about this, urging: "Hate what is bad, and love what is good." (Amos 5:15) William Rainey Harper, late professor of Semitic languages and literatures at the University of Chicago, noted about this verse: "The standard of good and evil, in [Amos'] mind, is conformity with Yahweh's will." This is a central concept that we can learn from the 12 prophets. Are we willing to accept Jehovah's standards of good and bad? Those high standards are revealed to us in the Bible and explained by mature, experienced Christians who make up "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matthew 24:45-47.

17 Our hating what is bad helps us to refrain from things that displease God. For example, a man may be aware of the dangers of Internet pornography and try to turn away from viewing it. Yet, how does 'the man he is inside' feel about the content of pornographic Web sites? (Ephesians 3:16) By applying the divine exhortation found at Amos 5:15, he will find it easier to cultivate hatred for what is bad. He may thus be victorious in his spiritual struggle.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Amos 2:12) 'But you kept giving the Naz'i·rites wine to drink, And you commanded the prophets: "You must not prophesy."

***w07* 10/1 14 ¶8**
Highlights From the Books of Joel and Amos

2:12. We should not discourage hardworking pioneers, traveling overseers, missionaries, or members of the Bethel family by urging them to give up their full-time service for a so-called normal way of life. On the contrary, we should encourage them to keep up their good work.

(Amos 8:1, 2) This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah showed me: Look! There was a basket of summer fruit. 2 Then he said, "What do you see, A'mos?" I replied, "A basket of summer fruit." Then Jehovah said to me: "The end has come for my people Israel. I will no longer pardon them.

***w07* 10/1 14 ¶6**
Highlights From the Books of Joel and Amos

8:1, 2—What did "a basket of summer fruit" signify? It signified that the day of Jehovah was near. Summer fruit is picked toward the end of the harvest season, that is, toward the end of the agricultural year. When Jehovah caused Amos to see "a basket of summer fruit," it meant that the end was near for Israel. Therefore, God told Amos: "The end has come to my people Israel. I shall no more do any further excusing of them."

Bible Reading

(Amos 4:1-13) "Hear this word, you cows of Ba'shan, Who are on the mountain of Sa·mar'i·a,

You women who are defrauding the lowly and crushing the poor, Who say to their husbands, ‘Bring us something to drink!’ 2 The Sovereign Lord Jehovah has sworn by his holiness, ‘“Look! The days are coming upon you when he will lift you up with butcher hooks And the rest of you with fishhooks. 3 You will go out through the breaches in the wall, each one straight ahead; And you will be cast out to Har′mon,” declares Jehovah.’ 4 ‘Come to Beth′el and commit transgression, To Gil′gal and transgress even more! Bring your sacrifices in the morning, And your tithes on the third day. 5 Burn a thanksgiving sacrifice of leavened bread; Loudly proclaim your voluntary offerings! For that is what you love to do, O people of Israel,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 6 ‘And for my part, I made your teeth clean of food in all your cities And caused a lack of bread in all your houses; But you did not come back to me,’ declares Jehovah. 7 ‘I also withheld rain from you three months before the harvest; I made it rain on one city but not on another city. One plot of land would have rain, But another plot of land where there was no rain would dry up. 8 People of two or three cities staggered to one city to drink water, And they would not get satisfied; But you did not come back to me,’ declares Jehovah. 9 ‘I struck you with scorching heat and mildew. You multiplied your gardens and vineyards, But the locust would devour your fig trees and olive trees; And you still did not come back to me,’ declares Jehovah. 10 ‘I sent among you a pestilence like that of Egypt. With the sword I killed your young men and captured your horses. I made the stench of your camps rise up into your nostrils; But you did not come back to me,’ declares Jehovah. 11 ‘I caused an overthrow among you Like God’s overthrow of Sod′om and Go·mor′rah. And you were like a log snatched out of the fire; But you did not come back to me,’ declares Jehovah. 12 So that is what I will do to you, O Israel. Because this is what I will do to you, Get ready to meet your God, O Israel. 13 For look! he is the One who formed the mountains and created the wind; He tells man what His thoughts are, He turns the dawn into darkness, And he treads on earth’s high places; Jehovah the God of armies is his name.”

NOVEMBER 13-19

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | OBADIAH 1–JONAH 4

“Learn From Your Mistakes”

(Jonah 3:1-3) Then the word of Jehovah came to Jo′nah a second time, saying: 2 “Get up, go to Nin′e·veh the great city, and proclaim to her the message that I tell you.” 3 So Jo′nah got up and went to Nin′e·veh in obedience to the word of Jehovah. Now Nin′e·veh was a very large city—a walking distance of three days.

***ia* 114 ¶22-23**
He Learned From His Mistakes

22 What about Jonah? Did he learn to show his gratitude to Jehovah through obedience? He did. After three days and three nights, the fish brought Jonah right to the shore and “vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.” (Jonah 2:10) Imagine—after all that, Jonah did not even have to swim ashore! Of course, he did have to find his way from that beach, wherever it was. Before long, though, his spirit of gratitude was put to the test. Jonah 3:1, 2, says: “Then the word of Jehovah occurred to Jonah the second time, saying: ‘Get up, go to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim to her the proclamation that I am speaking to you.’” What would Jonah do?

23 Jonah did not hesitate. We read: “At that, Jonah got up and went to Nineveh in accord with the word of Jehovah.” (Jonah 3:3) Yes, he obeyed. Clearly, he had learned from his mistakes. In this too we need to imitate Jonah’s faith. We all sin; we all make mistakes. (Rom. 3:23) But do we give up, or do we learn from our mistakes and turn to a course of obedient service to God?

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Obadiah 10) Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, Shame will cover you, And you will perish forever.

***w07* 11/1 13 ¶5**
Highlights From the Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

10—How was Edom “cut off to time indefinite”? As foretold, the nation of Edom, with a government and people in a specific region of the earth, became extinct. Babylonian King Nabonidus conquered Edom about the middle of the sixth century B.C.E. By the fourth century B.C.E., Edom’s territory was inhabited by the Nabataeans, and the Edomites had to take up residence in the southern part of Judea, the

area of the Negeb that later came to be known as Idumea. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Edomites ceased to exist.

(Obadiah 12) You should not gloat over your brother's day on the day of his misfortune, You should not rejoice over the people of Judah on the day of their perishing, And you should not speak so arrogantly on the day of their distress.

***jd* 112 ¶4-5**
Dealing With Others as God Desires

4 You can find a lesson in God's condemnation of Edom, a land near Israel: "You ought not to watch the sight in the day of your brother, in the day of his misfortune; and you ought not to rejoice at the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing." (Obadiah 12) The Tyrians may have been "brothers" as to commercial activities, but the Edomites were in a real sense "brothers" to Israel, for they had descended from Esau, Jacob's twin. Even Jehovah called the Edomites Israel's "brothers." (Deuteronomy 2:1-4) Hence, it was truly hateful of the Edomites to rejoice when the Jews met calamity at the hands of the Babylonians.—Ezekiel 25:12-14.

5 Clearly, God did not approve of how the Edomites dealt with their Jewish brothers. We might ask, though, 'How would God evaluate the way I deal with my brothers?' One area of concern is how we view and treat a brother when things have not gone smoothly. For example, imagine that a Christian offended you or had a problem with one of your relatives. If you have "a cause for complaint," will you harbor resentment, not putting the matter behind you or not attempting to settle it? (Colossians 3:13; Joshua 22:9-30; Matthew 5:23, 24) Doing so could affect your actions toward the brother; you might act coolly, avoiding his company or speaking negatively about him. Extending the example, imagine that this brother later erred, perhaps even needing counsel or correction from the congregation elders. (Galatians 6:1) Would you reflect the Edomites' spirit and rejoice over the brother's difficulty? How would God want you to act?

Bible Reading

(Jonah 3:1-10) Then the word of Jehovah came to Jo′nah a second time, saying: 2 "Get up, go to Nin′e·veh the great city, and proclaim to her the message that I tell you." 3 So Jo′nah got up and went to Nin′e·veh in obedience to the word of Jehovah. Now Nin′e·veh was a very large city—a walking distance of three days. 4 Then Jo′nah entered the city, and walking a day's journey, he was proclaiming: "In just 40 days more, Nin′e·veh will be overthrown." 5 And the men of Nin′e·veh put faith in God, and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6 When the message reached the king of Nin′e·veh, he rose up from his throne and took off his royal garment and covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the ashes. 7 Furthermore, he issued a proclamation throughout Nin′e·veh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No man or beast, herd or flock, should eat anything at all. They should not take food, nor should they drink any water. 8 Let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast; and let them call out earnestly to God and turn from their evil ways and from the violence they practice. 9 Who knows whether the true God may reconsider what he intends to do and turn from his burning anger, so that we may not perish?" 10 When the true God saw what they did, how they had turned back from their evil ways, he reconsidered the calamity that he said he would bring on them, and he did not bring it.

NOVEMBER 20-26

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MICAH 1-7

"What Does Jehovah Require of Us?"

(Micah 6:6, 7) With what will I come before Jehovah? With what will I bow before God on high? Will I come before him with whole burnt offerings, With year-old calves? 7 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, With tens of thousands of torrents of oil? Will I give my firstborn son for my revolt, The fruit of my body for my sin?

***w08* 5/15 6 ¶20**
How Should We Treat Others?

20 From God's standpoint, our relationship with our brothers is an important part of true worship. Animal sacrifices were meaningless to Jehovah if those offering them did not treat their fellow man properly. (Mic. 6:6-8) Hence, Jesus urged his disciples to "be about settling matters quickly." (Matt. 5:25) Along similar lines, Paul wrote: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil." (Eph. 4:26, 27) If we do become justifiably angry, we should act to settle matters quickly so that we do not remain in a provoked state and thus allow the Devil to take advantage of us.—Luke 17:3, 4.

(Micah 6:8) He has told you, O man, what is good. And what is Jehovah requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, And to walk in modesty with your God!

***w12* 11/1 22 ¶4-7**
"What Is Jehovah Asking Back From You?"

"Exercise justice." The Hebrew word for "justice," according to one reference work, "involves right and fair relationships in the community." God asks us to treat others according to what is right and fair by *his* standards. We exercise justice by being impartial, upright, and honest in our dealings with others. (Leviticus 19:15; Isaiah 1:17; Hebrews 13:18) When we act justly toward others, they may be moved to act justly toward us in return.—Matthew 7:12.

"To love kindness." God asks us not merely to *show* kindness but to *love* it. The Hebrew word rendered "kindness" (*che'sedh*) may also be rendered "loving-kindness" or "loyal love." Says one Bible scholar: "Love, mercy, and kindness are inadequate translations of [*che'sedh*]; it is no one of these virtues, but all of them together." If we love kindness, we show it willingly; we find pleasure in helping those in need. As a result, we experience the happiness that comes from giving.—Acts 20:35.

"To be modest in walking with your God." In the Bible, the phrase "to walk" means "to follow a certain course of action." We walk with God by following the life course he has outlined in the Bible. We need "to be modest" in pursuing such a course. How so? When we are modest before God, we realistically evaluate our position before him and recognize our limitations. Therefore, "to walk modestly with" means to have a realistic view of what he requires and of what we can give.

Thankfully, Jehovah never requires more than we can give. He is pleased with our best efforts to serve him. (Colossians 3:23) He understands our limitations. (Psalm 103:14) When we, with due modesty, learn to accept them as well, we can find joy in walking with him. Why not learn how you can begin walking with God? Such a course brings rich blessings from him.—Proverbs 10:22.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Micah 2:12) I will certainly gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely collect the remaining ones of Israel together. In unity I will place them, like sheep in the pen, Like a flock in its pasture; It will be noisy with people.'

***w07* 11/1 15 ¶6**
Highlights From the Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

2:12—When was the prophecy about 'collecting the remaining ones of Israel' fulfilled? Its first fulfillment was in 537 B.C.E. when a Jewish remnant returned to their homeland from Babylonian exile. In modern times, the prophecy finds its fulfillment in "the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16) Since 1919, anointed Christians have been collected together "like a flock in the pen." Being joined by the "great crowd" of "other sheep," especially since 1935, they have become "noisy with men." (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16) Together, they zealously promote true worship.

(Micah 7:7) But as for me, I will keep on the lookout for Jehovah. I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

***w03* 8/15 24 ¶20**
What Does Jehovah Expect of Us?

20 Experiencing Jehovah's blessing moves us to imitate Micah's spirit. He declares: "I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation." (Micah 7:7) How do these words relate to our walking modestly with God? Having a waiting attitude, or patience, helps us to avoid feeling disappointed that Jehovah's day has not yet come. (Proverbs 13:12) Frankly, we all long for the end of this wicked world. However, every week thousands of people are just beginning to walk with God. Knowing that gives us a reason for showing a waiting attitude. One longtime Witness said in this connection: "Looking back over 55 years in the preaching work, I am convinced that I have not lost anything by waiting on Jehovah. On the contrary, I have been spared many heartaches." Have you had a similar experience?

Bible Reading

(Micah 4:1-10) In the final part of the days, The mountain of the house of Jehovah Will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, And it will be raised up above the hills, And to it peoples will stream. **2** And many nations will go and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah And to the house of the God of Jacob. He will instruct us about his ways, And we will walk in his paths." For law will go out of Zion, And the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem. **3** He will render judgment among many peoples And set matters straight respecting mighty nations far away. They will beat their swords into

plowshares And their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, Nor will they learn war anymore. **4** They will sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one will make them afraid, For the mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken. **5** For all the peoples will walk, each in the name of its god, But we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever. **6** "In that day," declares Jehovah, "I will gather the one who was limping, And collect together the dispersed one, Along with those I treated harshly. **7** I will make the one who was limping a remnant, And the one far removed a mighty nation; And Jehovah will rule as king over them in Mount Zion, From now on and forever. **8** As for you, O tower of the flock, The mound of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come, yes, the first dominion will come, The kingdom belonging to the daughter of Jerusalem. **9** Now why are you shouting loudly? Have you no king, Or has your adviser perished, So that pain has seized you like a woman giving birth? **10** Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, Like a woman giving birth, For now you will go from the city and reside in the field. You will go as far as to Babylon, And there you will be rescued; There Jehovah will buy you back from the hand of your enemies.

NOVEMBER 27–DECEMBER 3

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | NAHUM 1–HABAKKUK 3

"Remain Spiritually Alert and Active"

(Habakkuk 2:1-4) At my guardpost I will keep standing, And I will station myself on the rampart. I will keep watch to see what he will speak by means of me And what I will reply when I am reproved. **2** Jehovah then answered me: "Write down the vision, and inscribe it clearly on tablets, So that the one reading aloud from it may do so easily. **3** For the vision is yet for its appointed time, And it is rushing toward its end, and it will not lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it! For it will without fail come true. It will not be late! **4** Look at the one who is proud; He is not upright within himself. But the righteous one will live by his faithfulness.

***w07* 11/15 10 ¶3-5**
Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

2:1. Like Habakkuk, we should remain spiritually alert and active. We should also be ready to adjust our thinking in line with any "reproof," or correction, we may receive.

2:3; 3:16. As we wait in faith for the coming of Jehovah's day, let us not lose the sense of urgency.

2:4. To survive the coming day of Jehovah's judgment, we must endure in faithfulness.—Hebrews 10:36-38.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Nahum 1:8) With a sweeping flood he will make a complete extermination of her place, And darkness will pursue his enemies.

(Nahum 2:6) The gates of the rivers will be opened, And the palace will be dissolved.

***w07* 11/15 9 ¶2**
Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

2:6—What "gates of the rivers" were opened? These gates referred to the opening made in the walls of Nineveh by the waters of the Tigris River. In 632 B.C.E. when the joint forces of the Babylonians and the Medes came up against Nineveh, she did not feel particularly threatened. Secure behind her high walls, she considered herself to be an impenetrable city. However, heavy rains caused the Tigris to overflow. According to historian Diodorus, this "both inundated a portion of the city and broke down the walls for a distance." The river gates were thus opened, and as foretold, Nineveh was taken as quickly as fire devours dry stubble.—Nahum 1:8-10.

(Habakkuk 3:17-19) Although the fig tree may not blossom, And there may be no fruit on the vines; Although the olive crop may fail, And the fields may produce no food; Although the flock may disappear from the pen, And there may be no cattle in the stalls; **18** Yet, as for me, I will exult in Jehovah; I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. **19** The Sovereign Lord Jehovah is my strength; He will make my feet like those of a deer And cause me to tread on high places.

***w07* 11/15 10 ¶10**
Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

3:17-19. Even though hardship may befall us before and during Armageddon, we can be confident that Jehovah will supply us with "vital energy" as we joyfully continue serving him.

Bible Reading

(Habakkuk 2:15–3:6) Woe to the one who gives
his companions something to drink, Adding
to it rage and anger, to make them drunk, In
order to look on their nakedness! **16** You will be
glutted with dishonor rather than glory. You too
—drink and expose your uncircumcised condition. The cup in the right hand of Jehovah will
come around to you, And disgrace will cover over
your glory; **17** For the violence done to Leb′a·non
will cover you, And the destruction that terrified
the beasts will come upon you, Because of your
shedding men's blood And your violence to the
earth, To the cities and those living in them. **18** Of
what benefit is a carved image When its maker has carved it? Of what benefit is a metal
statue and a teacher of lies, Even though its
maker trusts in it, Making worthless gods that
are speechless? **19** Woe to the one who says to
a piece of wood, "Awake!" Or to a speechless
stone, "Wake up! Instruct us!" Look! It is overlaid
in gold and silver, And there is no breath at all
within it. **20** But Jehovah is in his holy temple. Be
silent before him, all the earth!' "

3 The prayer of Ha·bak′kuk the prophet, in dirges:
2 O Jehovah, I have heard the report about you.
I am in awe, O Jehovah, of your activity. In the
midst of the years bring it to life! In the midst
of the years make it known. May you remember to show mercy during the turmoil. **3** God
came from Te′man, The Holy One from Mount Pa′ran. (*Selah*) His majesty covered the heavens;
With his praise the earth was filled. **4** His brightness was like the light. Two rays flashed from his
hand, Where his strength was hidden. **5** Before
him went pestilence, And burning fever followed
at his feet. **6** He stood still and shook the earth.
With a look, he made nations leap. The eternal
mountains were smashed, And the ancient hills
bowed down. The paths of long ago are his.

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

DECEMBER 4-10

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ZEPHANIAH 1–HAGGAI 2

"Seek Jehovah Before His Day of Anger"

(Zephaniah 2:2, 3) Before the decree takes effect, Before the day passes by like chaff, Before the burning anger of Jehovah comes upon you, Before the day of Jehovah's anger comes upon you, 3 Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, Who observe his righteous decrees. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you will be concealed on the day of Jehovah's anger.

***w01* 2/15 18-19 ¶5-7**
Seek Jehovah Before the Day of His Anger

5 You might say: 'I am a dedicated, baptized servant of God, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Have I not already met those requirements?' Actually, more is involved than dedicating ourselves to Jehovah. Israel was a dedicated nation, but in Zephaniah's day the people of Judah were not living up to that dedication. As a result, the nation was eventually cast off. 'Seeking Jehovah' today involves developing and maintaining a warm personal relationship with him in association with his earthly organization. It means getting to know how God views matters and being attentive to his feelings. We seek Jehovah when we carefully study his Word, meditate upon it, and apply its counsel in life. As we also seek Jehovah's guidance in fervent prayer and follow the leading of his holy spirit, our relationship with him deepens and we are impelled to serve him 'with all our heart, soul, and vital force.'—Deuteronomy 6:5; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 4:6, 7; Revelation 4:11.

6 The second requirement mentioned at Zephaniah 2:3 is to "seek righteousness." Most of us made important changes so that we could qualify for Christian baptism, but we must continue to uphold God's righteous standards throughout our life. Some who started out well in this respect have allowed themselves to be sullied by the world. It is not easy to seek righteousness, for we are surrounded by people who view sexual immorality, lying, and other sins as normal. Yet, a strong desire to please Jehovah can overpower any tendency to seek the world's approval by trying to blend in with it. Judah lost God's favor because of mimicking her ungodly neighboring nations. Instead of imitating the world, then, let us be "imitators of God," cultivating "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:24; 5:1.

7 The third point made at Zephaniah 2:3 is that if we want to be hidden in the day of Jehovah's anger, we must "seek meekness." Each day, we rub shoulders with men, women, and young people who are anything but meek. To them, being mild-tempered is a flaw. Submissiveness is considered a serious weakness. They are demanding, selfish, and opinionated, believing that their personal "rights" and preferences must be accommodated at all costs. How sad it would be if some of those attitudes were to rub off on us! This is the time to "seek meekness." How? By being submissive to God, humbly accepting his discipline and conforming to his will.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zephaniah 1:8) "On the day of Jehovah's sacrifice I will call to account the princes, The sons of the king, and all those wearing foreign clothing.

***w07* 11/15 11 ¶3**
Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

1:8. Some in Zephaniah's day were apparently seeking the acceptance of surrounding nations by "wearing foreign attire." How foolish it would be for Jehovah's worshippers today to try to conform to the world by similar means!

(Haggai 2:9) "'The future glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Jehovah of armies. "'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares Jehovah of armies."

***w07* 12/1 9 ¶3**
Highlights From the Books of Haggai and Zechariah

2:9—In what ways could 'the glory of the later house become greater than that of the former'? This was to be in at least three ways: the number of years the temple was in existence, who taught there, and who flocked there to worship Jehovah. Although Solomon's glorious temple stood for 420 years, from 1027 B.C.E. to 607 B.C.E., the "later house" was in use for over 580 years, from its completion in 515 B.C.E. to its destruction in 70 C.E. Moreover, the Messiah—Jesus Christ—taught in the "later house," and more people came to it than to "the former" in order to worship God.—Acts 2:1-11.

Bible Reading

(Haggai 2:1-14) In the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month, the word of Jehovah came through Hag′gai the prophet, saying, **2** "Please ask Ze·rub′ba·bel son of She·al′ti·el, the governor of Judah, and Joshua son of Je·hoz′a·dak, the high priest, and the rest of the people: **3** 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem like nothing in comparison?' **4** "'But now be strong, Ze·rub′ba·bel,' declares Jehovah, 'and be strong, Joshua son of Je·hoz′a·dak, the high priest.' "'And be strong, all you people of the land,' declares Jehovah, 'and work.' "'For I am with you,' declares Jehovah of armies. **5** 'Remember what I promised you when you came out of Egypt, and my spirit remains among you. Do not be afraid.'" **6** "For this is what Jehovah of armies says, 'Yet once more—in a little while—and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.' **7** "'And I will shake all the nations, and the precious things of all the nations will come in; and I will fill this house with glory,' says Jehovah of armies. **8** "'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,' declares Jehovah of armies. **9** "'The future glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Jehovah of armies. "'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares Jehovah of armies." **10** On the 24th day of the ninth month, in the second year of Da·ri′us, the word of Jehovah came to Hag′gai the prophet, saying: **11** "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'Ask, please, the priests about the law: **12** "If a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his clothing, and his clothing touches bread or stew or wine or oil or any sort of food, will it become holy?"'" The priests answered: "No!" **13** Hag′gai then asked: "If someone who is unclean from contact with a dead body touches any of these things, will it become unclean?" The priests answered: "It will become unclean." **14** So Hag′gai said: "'That is how this people is, and that is how this nation is before me,' declares Jehovah, 'and that is how all the work of their hands is; whatever they present there is unclean.'

DECEMBER 11-17

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ZECHARIAH 1-8

"Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew"

(Zechariah 8:20-22) "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'It will yet come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; **21** and the inhabitants of one city will go to those of another and say: "Let us earnestly go to beg for the favor of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I am also going." **22** And many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.'

***w14* 11/15 27 ¶14**
"Now You Are God's People"

14 The flocking of many humans to worship Jehovah with his people in this time of the end was foretold by two ancient prophets. Isaiah prophesied: "Many peoples will go and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' For law will go out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem." (Isa. 2: 2, 3) Likewise, the prophet Zechariah foretold that "many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah." He depicted them as "ten men out of all the languages of the nations" who, symbolically speaking, would take hold of the robe of spiritual Israel, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people."—Zech. 8:20-23.

(Zechariah 8:23) "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people."'"

***w16.01* 23 ¶4**
"We Want to Go With You"

4 If it is not possible to know with certainty the names of all spiritual Israelites on earth today, how can members of the other sheep "go with" them? Notice what the prophecy in Zechariah states concerning the figurative ten men. These ones would "take firm hold of the robe of a *Jew,* saying: 'We want to go with *you,* for we have heard that God is with *you people.'"* Although only one Jew is mentioned here, in both instances the pronoun "you" refers to more than one person. This spiritual Jew must, then, be a composite person, not just one individual! So it is not necessary to identify every spiritual Jew and then go with him or her. Rather, we need to identify these ones *as a group* and then

support them as such. In no way do the Scriptures encourage us to follow an individual. Jesus is our Leader.—Matt. 23:10.

***w09* 2/15 27 ¶14**
They "Keep Following the Lamb"

14 Jesus Christ considers the loyal support given to his brothers as being given to him. (*Read Matthew 25:40.*) In what way, then, can those who have the earthly hope support Christ's spirit-anointed brothers? Principally by helping them with the Kingdom-preaching work. (Matt. 24:14; John 14: 12) While the number of anointed ones on the earth has decreased over the decades, the number of the other sheep has increased. When those who have an earthly hope share in the witness work, serving if possible as full-time evangelizers, they support the spirit-anointed ones in fulfilling the disciple-making assignment. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Not to be overlooked are the opportunities to support this work by making financial contributions in various ways.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zechariah 5:6-11) So I asked: "What is it?" He replied: "This is the e′phah container that is going out." He continued: "This is their appearance in all the earth." 7 And I saw that the round lid of lead was lifted up, and there was a woman sitting inside the container. 8 So he said: "This is Wickedness." Then he threw her back into the e′phah container, after which he thrust the lead weight over its mouth. 9 Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward, and they were soaring in the wind. They had wings like the wings of a stork. And they lifted up the container between the earth and heaven. 10 So I asked the angel who was speaking with me: "Where are they taking the e′phah container?" 11 He replied: "To the land of Shi′nar to build her a house; and when it is prepared, she will be deposited there in her proper place."

***w17.10* 25 ¶18**
Visions of Zechariah—How They Affect You

18 However, the vision also reminded the Jews of their responsibility to maintain the purity of their worship. Wickedness cannot and will not be allowed to creep into and dwell among Jehovah's people. After we have been brought into the protective and loving care of God's clean organization, we have the responsibility to help maintain it. Are we moved to keep our "house" clean? Wickedness in any form does not belong in our spiritual paradise.

(Zechariah 6:1) Then I looked up again and saw four chariots coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were of copper.

***w17.10* 27-28 ¶7-8**
Chariots and a Crown Safeguard You

7 In the Bible, mountains can represent kingdoms, or governments. The mountains in Zechariah's account are similar to two mountains described in Daniel's prophecy. One mountain represents Jehovah's universal and eternal rulership. The other mountain represents the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus. (Dan. 2:35, 45) Since Jesus' enthronement in the autumn of 1914, both mountains have been present and have played a special role in the fulfillment of God's will on earth.

8 Why are the mountains made of copper? Like gold, copper is a metal that is highly valued. Jehovah directed that this shiny metal be used in the construction of the tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. (Ex. 27:1-3; 1 Ki. 7:13-16) Appropriately, then, the copper of the two symbolic mountains reminds us of the excellent quality of Jehovah's universal sovereignty and of the Messianic Kingdom, which will provide stability and blessings to all mankind.

Bible Reading

(Zechariah 8:14-23) "For this is what Jehovah of armies says, '"Just as I had determined to bring calamity on you because your forefathers made me indignant," says Jehovah of armies, "and I felt no regret, 15 so at this time I have determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not be afraid!"' 16 "'These are the things you should do: Speak the truth with one another, and the judgments in your gates must promote truth and peace. 17 Do not scheme calamity against one another in your hearts, and do not love any false oath; for these are all things that I hate,' declares Jehovah." 18 The word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: 19 "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month will be occasions for exultation and joy for the house of Judah—festivals of rejoicing. So love truth and peace.' 20 "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'It will yet come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; 21 and the inhabitants of one city will go to those

of another and say: “Let us earnestly go to beg for the favor of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I am also going.” 22 And many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.’ 23 “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: “We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.”’”

DECEMBER 18-24

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | ZECHARIAH 9-14

“Stay in ‘the Valley of the Mountains’”

(Zechariah 14:3, 4) “Jehovah will go out and war against those nations as when he fights in the day of a battle. 4 In that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in half, from east to west, forming a very great valley; and half of the mountain will move to the north, and half of it to the south.

***w13* 2/15 19 ¶10**
Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

10 When the symbolic mountain splits, half to the north and half to the south, Jehovah’s feet remain set upon both mountains. “A very great valley” comes into existence beneath Jehovah’s feet. This symbolic valley represents divine protection, by which Jehovah’s servants find safety under his universal sovereignty and his Son’s Messianic Kingdom. Jehovah will make sure that pure worship will never be snuffed out. When did this division of the mountain of the olive trees take place? It occurred when the Messianic Kingdom was established at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914. When did the flight of true worshippers to the symbolic valley begin?

(Zechariah 14:5) You will flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains will extend all the way to A′zel. You will have to flee, just as you fled because of the earthquake in the days of King Uz·zi′ah of Judah. And Jehovah my God will come, and all the holy ones will be with him.

***w13* 2/15 20 ¶13**
Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

13 If we stick to Jehovah and stand firm in the truth, he and his Son, Jesus Christ, will do their part, and God will not allow anyone or anything to ‘snatch us out of His hand.’ (John 10:28, 29) Jehovah is ready to extend whatever help is needed so that we may obey him as the Universal Sovereign and remain loyal subjects of the Messianic Kingdom. It is imperative that we remain in the valley of protection, for that valley will take on even greater meaning for true worshippers during the fast-approaching great tribulation.

(Zechariah 14:6, 7) “In that day there will be no precious light—things will be congealed. 7 And it will become one day that is known as belonging to Jehovah. It will not be day, nor will it be night; and at evening time there will be light.

(Zechariah 14:12) “And this is the scourge with which Jehovah will scourge all the peoples who wage war against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot away while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot away in their sockets, and their tongues will rot away in their mouths.

(Zechariah 14:15) “And a scourge like that scourge will also come against the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and all the livestock that are in those camps.

***w13* 2/15 20 ¶15**
Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

15 On the day of God’s warring, what will be the situation of those outside the “great valley” of protection? They will have “no precious light” of divine favor shining upon them. In that coming day of fight, “the horse, the mule, the camel, and the male ass, and every sort of domestic animal”—symbols of the nations’ military equipment—will be affected. Such equipment will be “congealed,” put out of operation as if stiffened by cold. Jehovah will also use pestilence and “the scourge.” Whether literal or not, the scourge will silence terrifying threats. On that day, “one’s very eyes . . . and tongue will rot away” in that the attackers will be able to strike out only blindly and their defiant speech will be silenced. (Zech. 14:6, 7, 12, 15) No section of the earth will escape destruction. The forces lined up on Satan’s side in the battle will be tremendous. (Rev. 19:19-21) “Those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end.”—Jer. 25:32, 33.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zechariah 12:3) In that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone to all the peoples. All those

who lift it are sure to be severely injured; and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her.

***w07* 12/15 22-23 ¶9-10**
No Weapon Formed Against You Will Succeed

9 Zechariah's prophecy sheds light on the reason why the nations take their stand against true Christians. Note what Zechariah 12:3 says: "It must occur in that day that I shall make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all the peoples." To which Jerusalem does this prophecy point? Zechariah's prophecy concerning Jerusalem applies to "heavenly Jerusalem," the heavenly Kingdom to which anointed Christians have been called. (Hebrews 12:22) A small remnant of these heirs of the Messianic Kingdom are still on earth. Along with their companions, the "other sheep," they urge people to turn to God's Kingdom while there is yet time. (John 10:16; Revelation 11:15) How have the nations reacted to this invitation? And what kind of support does Jehovah give to true worshippers today? Let us find out as we further examine the meaning of Zechariah chapter 12. Doing so, we can gain the assurance that 'no weapon will succeed' against God's anointed ones and their dedicated associates.

10 Zechariah 12:3 indicates that the nations receive "severe scratches." How does this happen? God has decreed that the good news of the Kingdom must be preached. Jehovah's Witnesses take seriously the obligation to preach. However, the heralding of the Kingdom as mankind's only hope has become "a burdensome stone" to the nations. They try to lift it out of the way by interfering with the Kingdom preachers. In so doing, the meddling nations have received "severe scratches for themselves," getting all cut up. Even their reputations have been hurt as they meet with humiliating failure. They cannot silence true worshippers, who cherish the privilege of proclaiming the "everlasting good news" of God's Messianic Kingdom before the end of this system of things. (Revelation 14:6) When seeing the violence done to Jehovah's servants, a prison guard in one African land said, in effect: 'You are wasting your efforts in persecuting these people. They will never compromise. They just increase.'

(Zechariah 12:7) "And Jehovah will save the tents of Judah first, so that the beauty of the house of David and the beauty of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be too great over Judah.

***w07* 12/15 25 ¶13**
No Weapon Formed Against You Will Succeed

13 *Read Zechariah 12:7, 8.* In ancient Israel, tents were a distinctive feature in the land, at times being used by shepherds and agricultural workers. Such people would be the first affected and would be in need of protection if an enemy nation came to attack the city of Jerusalem. The expression "the tents of Judah" indicates that the anointed remnant in our time are out in the open field, so to speak, not in fortified cities. There they fearlessly defend the interests of the Messianic Kingdom. Jehovah of armies will save "the tents of Judah first" because these are in the direct line of Satan's attack.

Bible Reading

(Zechariah 12:1-14) A pronouncement: "The word of Jehovah concerning Israel," declares Jehovah, The One who stretched out the heavens, Who laid the foundation of the earth, And who formed the spirit of man within him. 2 "Here I am making Jerusalem a cup that causes all the surrounding peoples to stagger; and there will be a siege against Judah as well as against Jerusalem. 3 In that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone to all the peoples. All those who lift it are sure to be severely injured; and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her. 4 In that day," declares Jehovah, "I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness. I will keep my eyes on the house of Judah, but I will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 And the sheikhs of Judah will say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a strength to me by means of Jehovah of armies their God.' 6 In that day I will make the sheikhs of Judah like a fiery pot among wood and like a fiery torch in a row of cut grain, and they will consume all the surrounding peoples on the right and on the left; and Jerusalem will again be inhabited in her place, in Jerusalem. 7 "And Jehovah will save the tents of Judah first, so that the beauty of the house of David and the beauty of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be too great over Judah. 8 In that day Jehovah will be a defense around the inhabitants of Jerusalem; in that day the one who stumbles among them will be like David, and the house of David like God, like Jehovah's angel who goes before them. 9 And in that day I will be certain to annihilate all the nations that

come against Jerusalem. 10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and supplication, and they will look to the one whom they pierced, and they will wail over him as they would wail over an only son; and they will grieve bitterly over him as they would grieve over a firstborn son. 11 In that day the wailing in Jerusalem will be great, like the wailing at Ha·dad·rim′mon in the Plain of Me·gid′do. 12 And the land will wail, each family by itself; the family of David's house by itself, and their women by themselves; the family of Nathan's house by itself, and their women by themselves; 13 the family of Le′vi's house by itself, and their women by themselves; the family of the Shim′e·ites by itself, and their women by themselves; 14 and all the families that are left remaining, each family by itself, and their women by themselves.

DECEMBER 25-31

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MALACHI 1-4

"Does Your Marriage Please Jehovah?"

(Malachi 2:13, 14) "And there is another thing that you do, which results in covering the altar of Jehovah with tears and with weeping and sighing, so that he no longer pays attention to your gift offering or looks favorably on anything from your hand. 14 And you say, 'For what reason?' It is because Jehovah has acted as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously, although she is your partner and your wife by covenant.

***jd* 125-126 ¶4-5**
Contribute to Family Life That Pleases God

4 During Malachi's day in the fifth century B.C.E., divorce was rampant among the Jews. Malachi told them: "Jehovah himself has borne witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you yourself have dealt treacherously." Because of treacherous dealings on the part of husbands, the altar of Jehovah was covered with the tears of betrayed wives, "with weeping and sighing." And corrupt priests condoned such cruelty!—Malachi 2: 13, 14.

5 How did Jehovah view the deplorable attitude toward marriage in Malachi's time? "'He has hated a divorcing,' Jehovah the God of Israel has said," wrote Malachi. He also affirmed that Jehovah 'has not changed.' (Malachi 2:16; 3:6) Do you see the point? God had earlier taken a position against divorce. (Genesis 2:18, 24) He did so in Malachi's day. And he still does today. Some people may decide to walk out of their marriage simply because they are not satisfied with their mate. Treacherous though their heart may be, Jehovah searches through it. (Jeremiah 17:9, 10) He is aware of any deceit or malicious scheming behind a divorce, however one may rationalize it. Yes, "all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting."—Hebrews 4:13.

(Malachi 2:15, 16) But there was one who did not do it, for he had what remained of the spirit. And what was that one seeking? The offspring of God. So guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and do not deal treacherously with the wife of your youth. 16 For I hate divorce," says Jehovah the God of Israel, "and the one who covers his garment with violence," says Jehovah of armies. "And guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and you must not deal treacherously.

***w02* 5/1 18 ¶19**
Jehovah Hates the Course of Treachery

19 On the positive side, Malachi shows that some husbands were not dealing treacherously with their wives. They 'had what was remaining of God's holy spirit.' (Verse 15) Happily, God's organization today abounds with such men who 'assign honor to their wives.' (1 Peter 3:7) They do not abuse their wives physically or verbally, do not insist on degrading sexual practices, and do not dishonor their wives by flirting with other women or by viewing pornography. Jehovah's organization is also blessed by having an abundance of faithful Christian wives who are loyal to God and his laws. All such men and women know what God hates, and they think and act accordingly. Continue to be like them, 'obeying God as ruler' and being blessed by his holy spirit. —Acts 5:29.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Malachi 1:10) "And who among you is willing to shut the doors? For you will not even light my altar without charge. I find no delight in you," says Jehovah of armies, "and I take no pleasure in any gift offering from your hand."

***w07* 12/15 27 ¶1**
Highlights From the Book of Malachi

1:10. Jehovah took no pleasure in the offerings of the greedy priests, who would charge a fee even for

such simple services as shutting doors or lighting altar fires. How important it is that our acts of worship, including what we do in the Christian ministry, be motivated by unselfish love for God and neighbor, never for monetary gain!—Matthew 22:37-39; 2 Corinthians 11:7.

(Malachi 3:1) "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will clear up a way before me. And suddenly the true Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant will come, in whom you take delight. Look! He will certainly come," says Jehovah of armies.

***w13* 7/15 10-11 ¶5-6**
"Look! I Am With You All the Days"

5 Centuries before Jesus gave the illustration of the wheat and the weeds, Jehovah inspired his prophet Malachi to foretell events that are reflected in Jesus' illustration. **(*Read Malachi 3:1-4.*)** John the Baptizer was the 'messenger who cleared up the way.' (Matt. 11:10, 11) When he came in 29 C.E., a time of judgment for the nation of Israel had drawn close. Jesus was the second messenger. He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem twice—first at the start of his ministry and second toward the end. (Matt. 21:12, 13; John 2:14-17) Hence, Jesus' cleansing work involved a period of time.

6 What is the larger fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy? During the decades leading up to 1914, C. T. Russell and his close associates did a work like that of John the Baptizer. That vital work involved restoring Bible truths. The Bible Students taught the true meaning of Christ's ransom sacrifice, exposed the hellfire lie, and proclaimed the coming end of the Gentile Times. Still, there were numerous religious groups who claimed to be Christ's followers. So a crucial question needed to be answered: Who among those groups were the wheat? To settle that question, Jesus began to inspect the spiritual temple in 1914. That inspection and cleansing work involved a period of time—from 1914 to the early part of 1919.

Bible Reading

(Malachi 1:1-10) A pronouncement: The word of Jehovah to Israel through Mal′a·chi: 2 "I have shown love to you people," says Jehovah. But you say: "How have you shown us love?" "Was not E′sau the brother of Jacob?" declares Jehovah. "But I loved Jacob, 3 and E′sau I hated; and I made his mountains desolate and left his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." 4 "Though E′dom says, 'We have been shattered, but we will return and rebuild the ruins,' this is what Jehovah of armies says, 'They will build, but I will tear down, and they will be called "the territory of wickedness" and "the people whom Jehovah has forever condemned." 5 Your own eyes will see it, and you will say: "May Jehovah be magnified over the territory of Israel."'" 6 "'A son honors a father, and a servant his master. So if I am a father, where is the honor due me? And if I am a master, where is the fear due me?' Jehovah of armies says to you priests who are despising my name. "'But you say: "How have we despised your name?"' 7 "'By presenting polluted food on my altar.' "'And you say: "How have we polluted you?"' "'By saying: "The table of Jehovah is something to be despised." 8 And when you present a blind animal as a sacrifice, you say: "It is nothing bad." And when you present a lame animal or a sick one: "It is nothing bad."'" "Try presenting them, please, to your governor. Will he be pleased with you or receive you with favor?" says Jehovah of armies. 9 "And now, please, appeal to God, that he may show us favor. With such offerings from your own hand, will he receive any of you with favor?" says Jehovah of armies. 10 "And who among you is willing to shut the doors? For you will not even light my altar without charge. I find no delight in you," says Jehovah of armies, "and I take no pleasure in any gift offering from your hand."